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ABSTRACT

A survey conducted in May and June of 1987 sought the opinions of parents and teachers on how they view one another's role and performance in the education of children. The survey also measured the extent to which they were in agreement or disagreement about ways to strengthen home-school links. The resulting data are based on interviews with 1,002 teachers and 2,011 parents with children in the public schools. Information is given on: (1) a profile of American parents with children in the public schools; (2) how parents and teachers view key aspects of home and school; (3) barriers to greater contact between home and school; (4) desired versus actual contact between home and school; (5) forging stronger links between home and school; (6) attacking two problems that need cooperation from home and school (children with problems and dropouts); and (7) teachers' job satisfaction connected to relations between home and school. Data are presented on tables and charts with narrative observations. The detailed survey methodology is provided in Appendix A. Appendix B includes the two survey questionnaires showing the marginal frequencies for all questions. (JD)

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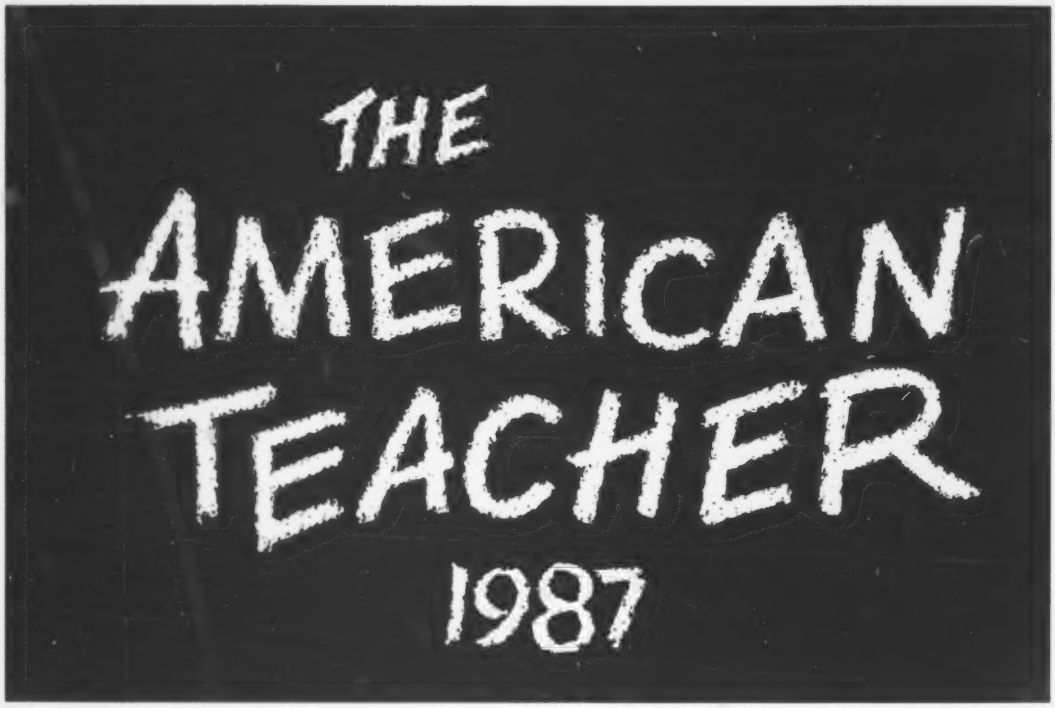

Strengthening Links Between Home and School

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THE AMERICAN TEACHER

SURVEYS IN THIS SERIES

The present report is part of a series of surveys, representing a sustained program of research that will bring teachers' opinions to the attention of the American public and policymakers.

First in the series is *The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher*, released in 1984. It measures and analyzes teachers' attitudes about educational reform. It reveals just how much teachers themselves are open to change and willing to be an integral part of the process of reform itself.

The second in the series is *The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1985: Strengthening the Profession*. It examines teachers' own agenda for educational reform. It reports what classroom teachers across the nation think is necessary to strengthen the teaching profession and to attract and retain good teachers.

Also conducted in 1985 was *The Metropolitan Life Survey of Former Teachers in America*, released in 1986. That report is based on a survey of former teachers — the first such survey nationwide — whose content parallels the 1985 survey of current teachers. It measures and compares the views of those who have left the teaching profession to work in some other occupation.

Next in the series is *The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1986: Restructuring the Teaching Profession*. That survey explores the structure of the teaching profession and ways to restructure the profession in the future. The 1986 project surveys virtually every level of educational leadership across the country. It reports the views of individual classroom teachers, of school principals and district superintendents, of state legislators, commissioners of education, and governors' aides who deal with education, and of teacher union officers and college deans of education. The survey offers a comprehensive perspective — from the ground up — of the issues facing the teaching profession today, and of specific reforms that generate consensus or disagreement.

The series also includes several reports on individual states — two surveys of California teachers and one of New York teachers — whose questions parallel the 1984 and 1985 nationwide studies.

The latest in the series, *The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1987: Strengthening Links Between Home and School*, has been conducted using the same general methodology as in previous years so as to facilitate the charting of trends over time. It expands the scope of the series to include the views of parents of America's school-aged children.

The Metropolitan Life Survey of

THE AMERICAN TEACHER 1987

Strengthening Links Between Home and School

Conducted for
Metropolitan Life Insurance Company
by
Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

Fieldwork:
May-June, 1987

Project Directors:
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THE AMERICAN TEACHER

FOREWORD FROM METROPOLITAN LIFE

Education in America has witnessed a great deal of upheaval and change in a few short years. This continues. And often teachers have been at the center of the debate on how to improve our valued institution of public education.

As this exciting new study shows, two groups have stood united in their commitment to educating America's youth — parents and teachers.

The role of the parent in the education of our youth, like that of the teacher, is often taken for granted. And like the teacher's, the parent's contribution to the educational process is critical to successful learning.

This study, the only one of its kind, probes the relationships between teachers and parents. The results are noteworthy. Parents' sobering assessment of their own performance and teachers' concerns about students left on their own are warnings that should not go unheeded.

Yet, teachers' and parents' understanding and respect for one another is demonstrated clearly in this year's survey. The survey results will undoubtedly spark positive discussion among all parties active in education.

We are pleased to be associated with Louis Harris and his distinguished organization. As expected, they have produced a valuable and much needed look at the essential link between home and school.

TRENDS ALERT: A PROMISING UPSWING IN THE MORALE OF THE NATION'S TEACHING FORCE

Key trend questions, which have been repeated several times over the years in this series of surveys, offer a sensitive barometer of the mood of America's teachers.

1. **The morale of the nation's teaching force has undergone a promising upturn during the past year.** The proportion of teachers saying they are satisfied with their job has risen by a significant four percentage points, from 81% to 85%. And the proportion of teachers saying they are likely to leave the profession during the next five years has dropped by almost five percentage points, from 27% to 22%.

2. **The improvements in morale appear to be broad-gauged and not confined to particular groups of teachers.** Almost every category of teacher studied showed an improvement in morale. This suggests that the causes are of the type that would affect all teachers. Such causes could include the sheer amount of attention given in the past couple years to the state of education and to the situation of teachers in this country, the momentum toward educational reform occuring in many states across the country, and objective improvements in salaries in some areas.

3. **But one group of teachers stands out as showing the largest improvement in morale — newer teachers who have less than five years experience.** They shifted by 19 points and are now considerably less likely than formerly to think they will leave the profession within the next five years. This holds promise that teaching may now be coming to be viewed as a more attractive career to enter and to remain in than it was in the recent past.

But there is no guarantee that the upturn in morale will be sustained in the future. Certainly, it is not automatic. If momentum is lost, if the priorities of policymakers shift to other areas, if the reforms and improvements achieved to date are not carried through, then we should not be surprised to see a future dip in teacher morale, perhaps even a large one. On the other hand, the rise in morale to date should be justifiably gratifying to all those who have labored in recent years for a strengthened educational system in this country. It is also a promising foundation for all of us to build upon for the future of our children.

Trends Table - 1 *Rise in Teacher Morale*

QUESTION: **All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job as a teacher in the public schools — very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?**

QUESTION: **Have you ever seriously considered *leaving* teaching to go into some other occupation?**

QUESTION: **Within the next 5 years how likely is it that you will leave the teaching profession to go into some different occupation — very likely, fairly likely, not too likely, not at all likely?**

Job Satisfaction†

	BASE	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
		%	%	%	%
All teachers 1984	1,981	40	41	16	2
All teachers 1985	1,602	33	48	15	4
All teachers 1987	1,002	40	45	12	2

†Not asked in 1985

Leaving the Profession‡

	BASE	EVER CONSIDERED LEAVING TEACHING	LIKELY TO LEAVE WITHIN NEXT 5 YEARS
		%	%
All teachers 1984	1,846	51	27
All teachers 1986	1,602	55	27
All teachers 1987	1,002	52	22

‡Not asked in 1984

Trends Table - 2 *Which Teachers Have Changed Their Likelihood of Leaving the Profession*

	1985 SURVEY	1986 SURVEY	1987 SURVEY	SHIFT IN 1987
Total Teachers	27	27	22	−5
Type of School				
Elementary	24	25	21	−4
Junior high	32	31	25	−7
High school	29	30	24	−6
Region				
East	28	24	25	−3
Midwest	22	24	18	−6
South	29	29	26	−3
West	29	32	21	−11
Size of Place				
Inner city	36	34	25	−11
Other urban	36	28	27	−9
Suburban	25	26	25	−1
Small town	25	26	21	−5
Rural	22	26	18	−8
District Wealth				
Above average	29	28	23	−6
Average for state	26	25	21	−5
Below average	27	30	23	−7
Sex of Teacher				
Male	33	30	29	−4
Female	23	25	19	−6
Teaching Experience				
Less than 5 years	19	39	20	−19
5 to 9 years	29	28	20	−9
10 to 19 years	25	24	24	−1
20 years or more	30	28	22	−8
Training of Teacher				
College graduate	30	28	19	−11
Some graduate credit	24	29	18	−11
Master's completed	25	22	28	+6
Beyond master's	29	30	25	−5
Ever Been Asked to Supervise Other Teachers				
Those who have	31	—	25	−6
Those who have not	23	—	21	−2

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THE AMERICAN TEACHER

INTRODUCTION

This is the latest in a series of Metropolitan Life surveys of teachers in the United States. It represents a sustained program of research designed to bring teachers' opinions to the attention of the American public and educational policymakers.

The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1987: Strengthening Links Between Home and School

This year's survey once again expands our scope to include the views of a key group who were not interviewed in any of our previous surveys — the parents of current American schoolchildren. We seek the views of parents, as well as the views of teachers, because relations between home and school are crucial to educating our children effectively. Therefore, the survey is designed to understand and to clarify those views, to learn how parents and teachers perceive one another's role and performance in the education of children, and to measure the extent to which they are in agreement or disagreement about ways to strengthen home-school links.

We believe that this survey is unique in interviewing large, nationwide samples of both teachers and parents of public schoolchildren, using parallel questionnaires in order to compare and contrast their views. We also believe that this is the first survey of actual parents — not just of the general adult public — that is of sufficient size (2,011 parents) to permit careful examination of how key sub-groups of parents feel — how black parents and Hispanic parents compare with white parents, for example, how inner-city parents compare with suburban parents, and how poor or disadvantaged parents compare with affluent parents.

In this report:

- Parents and teachers rate the quality of education today and identify specific aspects of the school they feel are more successful vs. less successful
- Teachers and parents offer the specific criticisms they have of parents and indicate the ways in which they feel many parents are not performing the role they should play in the education of children
- Parents and teachers describe the present state of contact between home and school — the types of contact they have with one another, how often they have it, and how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with it
- Parents and teachers tell how much contact with one another they actually want, what forms of involvement they prefer, and what they see as some of the major barriers that stand in the way
- Parents and teachers evaluate new steps that might be taken to strengthen the ties between home and school, identifying which links they each think would be valuable and which steps provoke disagreement

- Parents and teachers evaluate a proposal for one form of ultimate parent power — a system in which parents could choose between different public schools for their child — and describe the consequences they foresee
- Teachers indicate the top priority they give to not leaving children alone on their own after school hours, while parents discuss how often this happens now and the kind of programs they would support to reduce it
- Parents and teachers view the problem of students dropping out of school, and indicate the type of joint steps they think home and school can take to deal with the problem
- Teachers demonstrate the strong connection between the state of home-school links and their own job satisfaction as teachers, revealing crucial implications for the morale of the nation's teaching force

Survey Method

The survey is based on interviews with 1,002 teachers and 2,011 parents of children in the nation's public schools. All interviewing was done in May and June, 1987. Every public school teacher from kindergarten through grade 12 had an equal chance of being drawn into the sample of teachers. Parents were identified through the screening of approximately 9,000 households across the nation via random digit dialing (RDD) techniques. Every telephone household containing a child under age 21 who currently is or recently was a public school student had an equal chance of being drawn into the sample of parents. The detailed survey methodology, including information on response rates and statistical reliability of the samples, is provided in Appendix A. Appendix B includes the two survey questionnaires showing the marginal frequencies for all questions.

Notes on Reading the Tables

An asterisk (*) on a table signifies a value of less than one-half percent (0.5%). A dash (—) represents a value of zero. Percentages may not always add to 100% because of computer rounding, multiple answers from respondents, or the elimination of "no answers" from particular tables.

Public Release of the Survey Findings

All Louis Harris and Associates surveys are designed to adhere to the code of standards of the Council of American Survey Research Organizations (CASRO) and the code of the National Council of Public Polls (NCPP). Because data from this survey will be released to the public, any release must stipulate that the complete report is also available, rather than simply an excerpt from the survey findings.

Project Responsibility

The director of this project at Louis Harris and Associates was Michael R. Kagay, Ph.D., Vice President. He worked under the overall supervision of Humphrey Taylor, President. Jane Ross, Ph.D., Research Associate, contributed to all aspects of the project.

Louis Harris and Associates gratefully acknowledges the contributions of many individuals to this project. Our colleagues at Metropolitan Life and Program Planners, Inc., in particular, did a great deal to point us in worthwhile directions. However, responsibility for the survey questions, the findings, and their interpretation rests solely with Louis Harris and Associates.

THE AMERICAN TEACHER

HIGHLIGHTS

This summary provides an overview of the results of the survey. Many findings described in the body of the report do not appear in this summary.

A Major Cause of Problems in the Schools: Children on Their Own

Historically, many of the problems confronting the schools have been linked to poverty and underprivilege. In this survey teachers single out children being left alone after school as a major cause of students having difficulty in school. More teachers see this as a critical factor than stress poverty or single parent families, although of course the issues are related.

1. Teachers put top priority on not leaving children on their own after school hours. When asked to rank seven possible causes of students' having difficulty in school, teachers single out as the number one factor "children who are left on their own after school." And, when asked to evaluate seven possible criticisms of parents, teachers single out as their top criticism that parents "leave their children alone too much on their own after school."

2. Forty-one percent of parents say their child is often on his or her own between the end of school and 5:30 p.m. Twenty-four of the 41% say almost every day, while seventeen of the 41% say one or two days per week. Junior high and high school children are the most likely to be on their own.

3. The problem exists at all economic levels of society and in all parts of the country. While black children are somewhat more likely to be on their own, and while children of parents who work full-time are more likely to be on their own, the problem is not confined just to certain groups. Figures are substantial within every demographic category studied in this survey. The problem of children left on their own exists in all social strata.

Parents and Teachers Rate the Schools

The majority of parents and teachers see overall progress in American public education, but they agree on the need for several changes or reforms.

1. Parents and teachers rate some specific aspects of the schools much more highly than they rate others. Both parents and teachers give their highest marks to the personal or human aspects of education — the teaching staff. The qualifications and competence of the teachers and the degree to which teachers care about students are singled out for the highest praise out of 14 aspects rated.

2. Parents as well as teachers reserve their lowest ratings for some of the products or outputs from the school system — the success of the school in preparing students for jobs and college in the future. They seem to blame both the school and the home for this failing, as parents give relatively low ratings to the amount of homework assigned by the school, and both parents and teachers give low ratings to the degree to which most students seem motivated to learn.

3. On balance, the majority of parents as well as teachers believe that the education that children receive in school today is better than it was in the past. Between six out of ten and seven out of ten of both parents and teachers perceive such progress.

4. However, an important minority of up to three in ten parents — and a similar proportion of teachers — disagree. They believe that the education children receive today is worse than it was years ago. This critical minority represents a substantial constituency for reform and change in American public education.

Parents Acknowledge Criticisms of Their Performance

Parents receive widespread criticism for being lax in overseeing the educational progress of their children, not only from teachers but from themselves. Parents are self-critical and agree with many of the failings cited by teachers.

1. Over six in ten teachers (62%) think that "many" or "most" parents leave their children alone too much on their own after school. Surprisingly, nearly six in ten parents (59%) agree with this criticism.

2. Over half of America's teachers (51%) believe that many or most parents fail to discipline their children. An even greater percentage of parents (58%) agree with this indictment of the job being done by the home.

3. A majority of teachers (53%) say that many or most parents fail to motivate their children so that they want to learn in school. Nearly the same percentage of parents (52%) say they think so too.

4. However, most teachers do not feel that parents show any lack of respect for teachers. Although past surveys in this series have shown that teachers feel a profound lack of respect from society — as evidenced by what they see as low salaries and low professional prestige — teachers do not perceive any lack of respect from their own students' parents. Rather, the parents of a teacher's own students can better be seen as potential partners in the process of education.

Greater Parental Involvement Wanted

While parents are self-critical, they are surprisingly eager, not only to be kept informed of what is happening at school, but also to be actively consulted about many school policies. And teachers are strikingly open to parental involvement in the process of education. Teachers and parents are in agreement that parents should participate even inside the school itself.

1. Majorities or large pluralities of both teachers and parents endorse active consultation concerning a variety of important school practices and policies. These include changes in the discipline policy, and changes in extra-curricular activities, and changes in what subjects are taught.

2. But many teachers want to reserve purely pedagogical areas for themselves, due to their sense of professionalism in this area. These include decisions about grading standards and decisions about homework policy. Yet even in these pedagogical areas, four in ten teachers want to consult with parents.

3. Especially interesting findings reflect pleas on the part of certain groups of parents who currently feel they do not receive sufficient attention from the school. For instance, central city parents are more likely than either suburban or non-metropolitan-area parents to want active consultation. And single parents who work full-time are also especially likely to want consultation. Among teachers, those working in inner-city schools and other urban schools are particularly likely to endorse active consultation. This parallels the expressed desire of central city parents themselves.

4. Parents and teachers agree on the need for involvement at home and in the school. A majority of parents say that it is important for parents to be involved, not only from home (57%), but at the school itself (74%). And teachers are just as enthusiastic as parents about having parents involved inside the school (75%).

5. Contact between parents and teachers declines as children progress from lower grade levels to higher grade levels. Hand in hand with this decline goes rising dissatisfaction over the frequency of contact.

6. Parents who report the most contact with their child's school include: parents of elementary school children, parents who have college training, and parents with higher income. Considerably less contact with the school is reported by parents who have children of high school age and by parents who have fewer economic advantages in terms of income and education.

7. Extra-curricular events are an important draw in attracting parents to the school. Fifty percent of parents say they attend a play, sports event, or concert at school more than three times a year. But such events do not offer much opportunity to discuss either problems of individual children or more general issues of school policy, which is the kind of involvement many parents say they want. Those kinds of encounters occur less often.

8. Most parents say they are satisfied with the frequency of contact they currently have with their child's school. Eighty-five percent of parents say they are very or somewhat satisfied, with the "verys" outnumbering the "somewhats." Parents of elementary school children stand out as being the most satisfied.

9. But some categories of parents are much less satisfied. These include secondary school parents, parents living in the nation's central cities, and single parents who work full-time. Teachers on the whole report themselves to be somewhat less satisfied than do parents. Teachers with the highest rates of dissatisfaction are: high school teachers, inner city and other urban teachers, teachers working in districts that have below-average wealth, and new teachers with less than five years experience.

It's Not Easy for Parents and Teachers to Talk to Each Other

Three important barriers studied in this survey include the degree to which parents and teachers see one another as unavailable or unresponsive, the amount of reluctance each feels about approaching the other, and the potential mismatch of schedules due to the demands of work.

1. **Parents and teachers have quite different perceptions of one another's availability and responsiveness when they need to contact each other.** In the eyes of parents, the availability and responsiveness of teachers is the topmost rated of 14 aspects concerning the school. In the eyes of teachers, however, the availability and responsiveness of parents gains barely-positive marks (54% positive). Teachers working in inner city schools and in districts with below-average wealth are particularly likely to see parents in their local area as less available or responsive when contact is needed.

2. **A majority of teachers have felt reluctant to approach parents of their students to talk with them about their children.** Fifty-five percent of teachers say they have felt "uneasy or reluctant." Female teachers, elementary teachers, and white teachers are more likely to report such feelings.

3. **One-fifth of parents say that they, too, have felt awkward or reluctant about approaching a teacher to talk with them regarding their child.** Such parental feelings seem to be connected with differences in social background.

4. **Many parents and teachers experience a mismatch in schedules, causing them to prefer incompatible times for meetings.** Almost 90% of teachers say that the traditional times for one-on-one meetings — during the school day or after school in the afternoon — are the most convenient times for them. But only 67% of parents say that those traditional times of day would be convenient for them. One-third of parents say they would prefer to meet in the evening, but only 9% of teachers say that would be convenient for them.

5. **The demographic realities of the contemporary American family, therefore, have profound implications for home-school contacts.** Forty-four percent of households with schoolchildren now contain either a single parent working full-time (15%) or else two parents who both work full-time (29%). Only 27% of households with schoolchildren contain the "traditional" situation of two parents, one working and one staying at home who would, presumably, be available for meetings at school during the day or afternoon. Today's full-time working parents are the ones most likely to prefer evening meetings. Seven out of ten parents who work full-time say that in the past they have had to take time off from work to visit the school.

Support for New Steps to Link Home and School

Parents and teachers agree on many specific steps that would be valuable in linking home and school, but they disagree over others. Their patterns of agreement and disagreement offer more insight into the preferred types of greater involvement that each party has in mind.

1. Teachers can take the first step to increase the involvement of parents with the school; they need not wait for parents to act first. A large majority of teachers endorse this position, as do a plurality of parents.

2. Parents and teachers both endorse a role for parents that includes volunteer work, supportive activities, and promotional efforts. The topmost step is "providing parents with information and materials to support or reinforce what is being taught at school; seven in ten of both groups endorse this. Almost as popular is the idea of "having parents do volunteer work to help out the school." And a majority of both teachers and parents back the idea of "involving parents as promoters and fund raisers for the school."

3. But teachers and parents part company over proposals that might give parents power over curriculum or pedagogy. Small majorities or near majorities of parents endorse the idea of involving parents on a "management team to determine school policies" and "placing parents on committees that decide the curriculum of the school." But at most only a quarter of teachers go along with these proposals.

4. Parents and teachers both put high priority on measures that would result in parents better performing their role in nurturing and supervising the educational progress of their child. Overwhelming majorities of both parents and teachers endorse "having parents limit television until all homework is finished" and "having parents spend much more time with their children in support of school and teachers." The latter is the topranked step in the eyes of teachers, 84% of whom say it would help a lot to improve education.

5. But parents also see a need for more outreach from the school, whereas teachers see less urgency about the need for or the value of such outreach. At least six out of ten parents strongly favor "distributing a newsletter to keep parents informed about what's happening in school," and "establishing a homework hotline which students can call for advice on how to deal with a homework assignment." Low income parents and minority parents are even more in favor. But only between 40% and 50% of teachers think such devices would help a lot. The same pattern of parental enthusiasm and teacher hesitation occurs when it comes to "having the school give more guidance to teachers about how to involve parents better in the future." Teachers need to realize how much many parents would value such outreach training as well as specific outreach programs like newsletters and hotlines.

6. Parents and teachers both support additional uses of school facilities that could better integrate the school into the community, thus further linking home and school. These include using school facilities to offer night classes for adults, to organize special activities for the elderly, and to sponsor extra-curricular activities for students after school.

7. **They feel less priority, however, when it comes to using public school facilities to organize daycare for pre-school children.** This proposal gains less than majority support from both parents and teachers. Still, parents are somewhat more supportive of pre-school daycare than are teachers, and black parents are very supportive.

Possible Solutions to the Problem of Children Being Left Alone

1. **A majority of parents express willingness to utilize an after-school program organized by the school.** Non-educational programs of extra-curricular activities are even more popular with parents than educational programs after school.

2. **Interest in after-school programs goes beyond parents who work or who currently have children on their own.** A majority of all parents say they would be willing to pay for such programs in the event that the school budget could not afford it.

What if Parents Could Choose Between Schools?

One powerful form of home involvement with school would occur if parents could choose between several different public schools for their child. An ultimate form of parent power would be the ability to walk away from a school perceived as unresponsive, taking the child elsewhere.

1. **One-quarter of parents say that, if they had a choice, they would think seriously about choosing a different school.** Three-quarters say they are satisfied with their present school. Those most likely to want a change are parents living in central cities and single parents who work.

2. **But the constituency for choice and change is not confined just to certain groups. It is present in all parts of the country and at all levels of society.** This is because the minority who would opt for changing schools constitutes from 20% to 30% of every demographic grouping in the survey.

3. **Parents and teachers see both beneficial results and some undesirable effects as likely to flow from a system of choice between schools.** Parents who are actually interested in changing schools are particularly likely to perceive benefits.

Reducing Drop-Outs: New Vocational Education and Job Training

1. **Approximately one-fifth of both high school teachers and of parents with high school children across the country say that drop-outs are a major problem in their school.** Teachers working in districts of below-average wealth and parents who themselves did not graduate from high school are especially likely to see drop-outs as a problem in their area.

2. **The favored responses to the problem are providing more vocational education and job training for students, and informing parents immediately about any absences or truancy.** Parents and teachers choose these as the top solutions out of six possible measures. Teachers, however, are somewhat more cautious about just how much each measure could be expected to help.

Improved Links Between Home and School Would Raise Morale

Home-school links strongly affect teachers' job satisfaction, and job satisfaction strongly impacts on the likelihood of staying in or leaving the teaching profession. Therefore, anyone concerned about the recruitment, retention, and morale of America's teaching force must also be concerned with the current state of home-school links in this country, with the barriers that need to be overcome, and with the steps that must be taken to make parents and teachers more effective partners in the education of our children.

CHAPTER 1: A PROFILE OF AMERICAN PARENTS WITH CHILDREN IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1987: Strengthening Links Between Home and School explores the relations between home and school, between parent and teacher. Past surveys in this series have presented a detailed profile of the American teacher. This is our first opportunity to profile parents of American public schoolchildren (Table 1-1).

At the current time just slightly more than one-quarter of all U.S. households have a child in the nation's public schools. Today's parents are different. And they are not a homogeneous group. Table 1-1 shows the profile separately for white parents, black parents, and Hispanic parents because of what are in some cases sharp differences that suggest differing situations and differing needs.

Family Status and Work Status

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the profile consists of family status and work status. Only 27% of households with school aged children today consist of the "traditional" setting of two parents with one parent working and the other parent staying at home (Table 1-1).

One-quarter of the households consist of a single parent. Of these, eight out of ten work full- or part-time. Black families are particularly likely to consist of a single parent.

Three-quarters of the households do have two parents. But two out of three of them have both parents working at least part-time.

Other Patterns That Stand Out

Parents of current schoolchildren tend to be in their middle years as compared to all U.S. adults. Three-quarters of parents are in their thirties and forties as compared to only 35% of the whole adult population. This is quite understandable since these are the prime childrearing years.

Today's parents of children in the public schools include somewhat more blacks and Hispanics than the adult population at large. This reflects the higher birth rates and relative growth in minority populations in recent decades. But three-quarters of all parents are white. One-fifth of Hispanic parents say that English is not the main language spoken at home.

As compared to all U.S. adults, parents are slightly less likely to be in central cities and slightly more likely to be in the suburbs, small towns, and rural areas. Many parents clearly continue today, as did parents in the past, to make residential decisions with schools in mind. But a quarter of all parents with current schoolchildren remain in central cities, including 47% of black parents.

In terms of income, parents as a group tend to be slightly better off than all U.S. adults. This is because the entire adult population includes many elderly Americans living on modest fixed incomes, plus the youngest adults just starting their careers at the lower end of their respective wage scales and not yet married or with children of school age. Black parents and Hispanic parents are less well off financially than parents as a whole.

In terms of education, today's parents look very similar to all U.S. adults. Between 30% and 40% have had at least some college training, while over six in ten have a high school education or less. Hispanic parents have the lowest level of educational attainment.

OBSERVATION: These demographic realities of the contemporary American family have profound implications for relations between home and school. The substantial proportion of single parents and the large proportion of working parents can affect the time available for parents to be with their children and to work with the school. They can render some of the traditional forms of home-school contact difficult or impossible to schedule. They can create the need for mutual adjustments by teachers and parents, and the necessity for new programs or measures to strengthen home-school links.

Table 1-1 *Profile of American Parents With Children in Public Schools*

	ALL ADULTS IN U.S.	TOTAL PARENTS	RACE OF PARENT		
			WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
Base	2,011	2,011	1,573	211	150
	%	%	%	%	%
Child's School Level					
No child in school	73	—	—	—	—
Elementary	14	50	50	51	46
Junior high	6	22	21	29	21
High school	8	28	29	20	33
Region					
East	25	22	24	22	17
Midwest	25	25	29	15	11
South	31	37	32	52	40
West	19	16	15	11	33
Size of Place					
Central city	31	25	20	47	38
Rest of metro area	44	46	49	34	39
Outside metro area	24	28	31	20	22
Race					
White	81	73	100	—	—
Black	11	14	—	100	—
Hispanic	6	10	—	—	100
Age of Parent					
Under 30	29	12	9	18	18
30-39 years	22	46	42	44	42
40-49 years	13	31	36	25	25
50 or over	35	10	12	13	12
Education of Parent					
Less than high school	25	23	21	27	33
High school graduate	39	39	38	40	40
Some college	18	17	18	18	17
4 year college graduate	10	10	11	9	6
Beyond college	7	10	12	7	4

Table 1-1 *(continued)*

Profile of American Parents With Children in Public Schools

ALL ADULTS IN U.S.	TOTAL PARENTS	RACE OF PARENT		
		WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC
%	2,011 %	1,573 %	211 %	150 %
—	6	3	16	7
—	4	3	6	7
—	15	12	32	17
—	27	29	15	29
—	19	23	6	12
—	29	31	24	27
13	9	5	23	13
15	12	10	18	21
19	21	20	20	22
16	20	21	16	15
14	20	22	12	12
13	12	15	8	8
73	—	—	—	—
12	44	46	45	40
9	35	37	25	31
4	14	12	17	19
2	6	4	14	10
—	97	99	98	81
—	2	*	—	17
—	1	*	2	*
—	*	*	—	2

**Does not add to 100% because from 5% to 10% typically refuse to reveal their income category.

CHAPTER 2: PARENTS AND TEACHERS VIEW KEY ASPECTS OF HOME AND SCHOOL

Teachers and parents are agreed on many of the specific things they like best vs. least about today's schools. Majorities of parents and teachers see overall progress in education today, but many are unimpressed with particular aspects of the schools and critical minorities perceive an overall decline in education.

What Parents Like Best and Least About the School System

Parents as a whole give positive marks to most specific aspects of their child's public school. In regard to 13 out of the 14 aspects rated, more than 50% of parents give "excellent" or "good" marks to their child's school (Table 2-1). But this overall favorable balance encompasses a revealing range of variation. Some aspects of public education are rated much higher than others.

Parents reserve their highest ratings for the most personal or human aspect of education — the teaching staff. Over seven out of ten parents give positive marks to the availability and responsiveness of teachers, the degree to which teachers seem to care about their students, and the qualifications and competence of teachers in their school.

Parents give some of their lowest ratings to the products or outputs of the school system, i.e. the success of the school in preparing students for the future — for jobs after high school, and for education beyond high school. They seem to blame both the school and the home for this, as relatively low ratings are also given by parents both to the amount of homework assigned by the school, and the degree to which most students seem motivated to learn.

OBSERVATION: This finding confirms the conclusions of a survey by Harris in 1986 for the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. That survey revealed that the U.S. public as a whole is very concerned over the state of American economic competitiveness and over the difficulty that the nation's education system seems to have in training a labor force that can preserve and advance that competitiveness in the future.

What Teachers Like Best and Least About the School System

Despite all the problems with education which we have measured in past surveys, teachers evaluate various aspects of their own schools positively. On every one of the 14 aspects judged, 50% or more of American teachers offer ratings of "excellent" or "good" (Table 2-2). But, as is the case with parents, teachers rate some aspects much more highly than others.

American teachers single out for highest praise the same type of personal or human aspects that parents identified. Over 90% of teachers give positive marks to the qualifications and competence of their teaching colleagues, and to the degree to which teachers care about students.

Teachers reserve their most negative ratings for some of the same aspects that parents also single out: the success of the school in preparing students for jobs after high school, and the degree to which most students seem motivated to learn. Like parents, teachers also rate the school board relatively low.

OBSERVATION: Last year's survey in this series — which interviewed teachers, principals, superintendents, state legislators, and other state education officials, but not parents — also identified a pattern of the teaching staff topping the list whenever ratings are handed out. Of ten types of participants in public education at all levels, classroom teachers received the highest ratings in terms of their job performance. That survey, ***The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1986: Restructuring the Teaching Profession***, concluded that the highest ratings tend to go to those participants in public education who are the closest to individual students, and that lower ratings tend to be given to officials who are more remote or removed from the classroom level. The new 1987 survey confirms that pattern: parents as well as teachers give top marks to the teaching staff and much lower marks to the school board. This may reflect the decision-making role of school boards.

A Major Difference Between Teachers and Parents

A major difference between teachers and parents concerns each other's availability and responsiveness when they need to contact one another. In the eyes of parents, the availability and responsiveness of teachers is the topmost rated of the 14 aspects, garnering 76% positive marks. In the eyes of teachers, however, the availability and responsiveness of parents gains a barely positive rating (54% "excellent" or "good" vs. 46% "fair" or "poor").

The issues of how much contact and involvement currently do exist between parents and teachers, how much ideally should exist, what barriers now exist, and what solutions are preferred are all critical issues which will be examined in detail in later chapters of this report. But it is clear immediately that teachers and parents begin with quite different views on this subject, perhaps because of varying expectations or experiences.

Further Criticisms About Home and Parents

Lack of availability and responsiveness is not the only criticism about parents. Last year's survey, *The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 1986: Restructuring the Teaching Profession*, concluded that parents are seen as not performing the role they should play in the education of their children. That was registered in last year's survey when parents of school-aged children received some of the lowest job performance ratings given by teachers and by several other groups of education leaders surveyed. However, that indictment was a broad one, and its specifics were not measured in any detail at that time.

Therefore, teachers in this year's survey were asked to react to a number of specific criticisms that might be made of parents. Parents were asked the same questions in order to compare their own reactions. Their patterns of agreement now permit us to document the particular ways in which parents are seen as falling short in their duties. The surprising thing is that majorities of parents themselves are self-critical; they also agree with some of the key criticisms leveled by teachers (Table 2-3).

- Over six in ten teachers (62%) think that "many" or "most" parents leave their children alone too much on their own after school. Surprisingly, nearly six in ten parents concur (59%).
- Over half of America's teachers (51%) believe that many or most parents fail to discipline their children. An even greater percentage of parents (58%) agree.
- A majority of teachers (53%) say that many or most parents fail to motivate their children so that they want to learn in school. Nearly the same percent of parents (52%) say they think so too.

Smaller majorities or near-majorities of both teachers and parents also support two other criticisms: that parents take too little interest in their children's education in general, and that they neglect to see that their children's homework gets done in particular.

The overall picture that emerges from these findings is one of widespread criticism of parents for laxness in overseeing the educational progress of their children. But this is not simply external criticism; parents themselves self-critically join in.

OBSERVATION: However, another potential criticism of parents does not gain support either from teachers or from parents. Few think that parents fail to show respect for teachers. Previous surveys in this series documented that teachers feel a profound lack of respect from society. This lack of respect is symbolized particularly acutely by what they feel to be low salaries and

low professional prestige. We automatically assumed that low respect from parents was just one more element of this situation. However, this year's survey, makes it clear that parents themselves don't perceive any lack of respect from their end. Moreover, the survey reveals that teachers don't actually feel a lack of respect from their own students' parents (as opposed to from society at large). Thus, the parents of a teacher's own students may better be seen as potential partners in the process of the child's education.

Overall Progress vs. Decline in Education

On balance, both parents and teachers believe that the overall education children receive in school today is better than it was in the past. Between six out of ten parents, and a slightly larger proportion of teachers, perceive such progress — regardless of whether the reference point is three years ago, ten years ago, or when they themselves were in school (Table 2-4).

However, not all parents and teachers see progress in today's schools. As many as three in ten parents, and nearly the same proportion of teachers, disagree. They believe that the education children receive today is worse than it was years ago. This critical minority provide a strong constituency for reform and change. And in some important respects this constituency is even larger, because — when they look at specific aspects of the school, as we have seen above — we find that many more parents and teachers are unimpressed with particular aspects of today's schools.

Table 2-1 *How Parents Rate Key Aspects of Their Child's School*

QUESTION — **For each of the following aspects on which public schools can be judged, please tell me whether you would rate your school excellent, good, fair, or poor on that aspect.**

2011	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	NOT SURE OR NOT APPLICABLE
	%	%	%	%	%
[illegible]	38	38	16	8	1
[illegible]	31	39	21	9	*
[illegible]	27	50	18	5	1
[illegible]	26	48	20	4	2
[illegible]	26	46	20	7	1
[illegible]	26	41	23	9	1
[illegible]	25	47	21	7	1
[illegible]	20	50	23	5	2
[illegible]	17	49	22	7	4
[illegible]	17	40	20	8	16
[illegible]	16	47	24	9	4
[illegible]	15	44	30	9	2
[illegible]	15	43	27	11	4
[illegible]	12	32	19	13	25

Table 2-2 *How Teachers Rate Key Aspects of Their School*

QUESTION: **For each of the following aspects on which public schools can be judged, please tell me whether you would rate your school excellent, good, fair, or poor on that aspect.**

Base: 1,002	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	NOT SURE OR NOT APPLICABLE
	%	%	%	%	%
The qualifications and competence of teachers in your school	51	43	6	*	*
The degree to which most teachers seem to care about their students	49	44	6	*	*
The extent to which the school enables students to achieve some success in their work each day	31	59	10	*	*
The overall quality of the education that students receive at your school	30	61	8	1	*
The school's physical facilities	27	39	23	12	*
The success of the school in preparing students for education beyond high school	23	49	14	3	11
The amount of support for the school shown by the parents	22	36	31	11	*
The relations between parents and teachers in your school	18	52	24	5	*
The availability and responsiveness of parents when you need to contact them	16	38	34	12	1
The quality of the homework assigned by the school	12	60	19	2	7
The amount of homework assigned by the school	12	55	24	3	6
The success of the school in preparing students for jobs after high school	10	45	21	5	20
The effectiveness of the school board in dealing with school matters	11	40	35	14	1
The degree to which most students seem motivated to learn	9	43	39	9	1

*Less than 0.5%.

Table 2-3 *Criticisms That Parents and Teachers Think Are Valid for Many Parents*

QUESTION: **Let me ask about some criticisms that are sometimes made of parents. How many *parents* do you think (READ EACH ITEM) — most, many, some, or hardly any?**

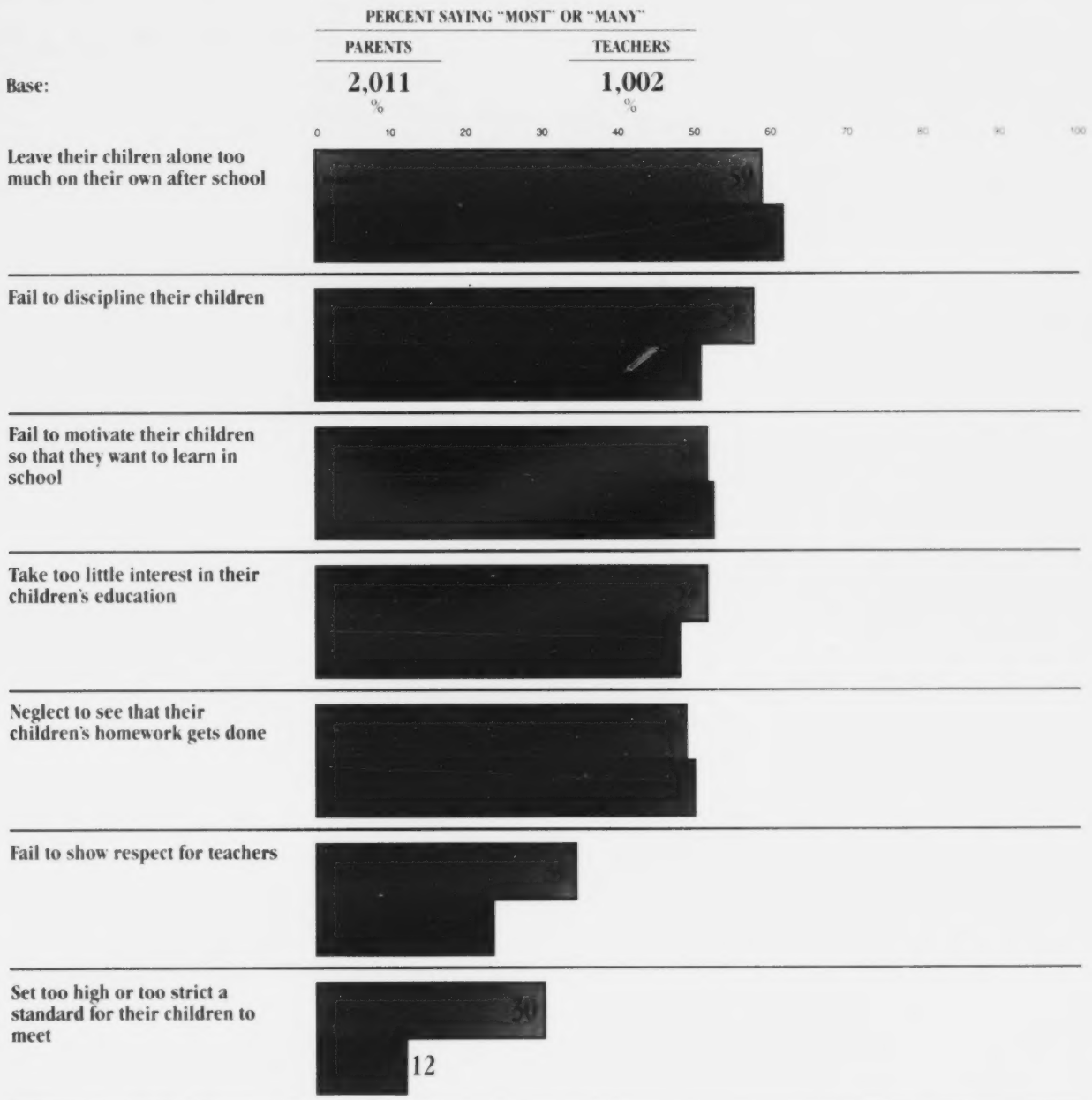
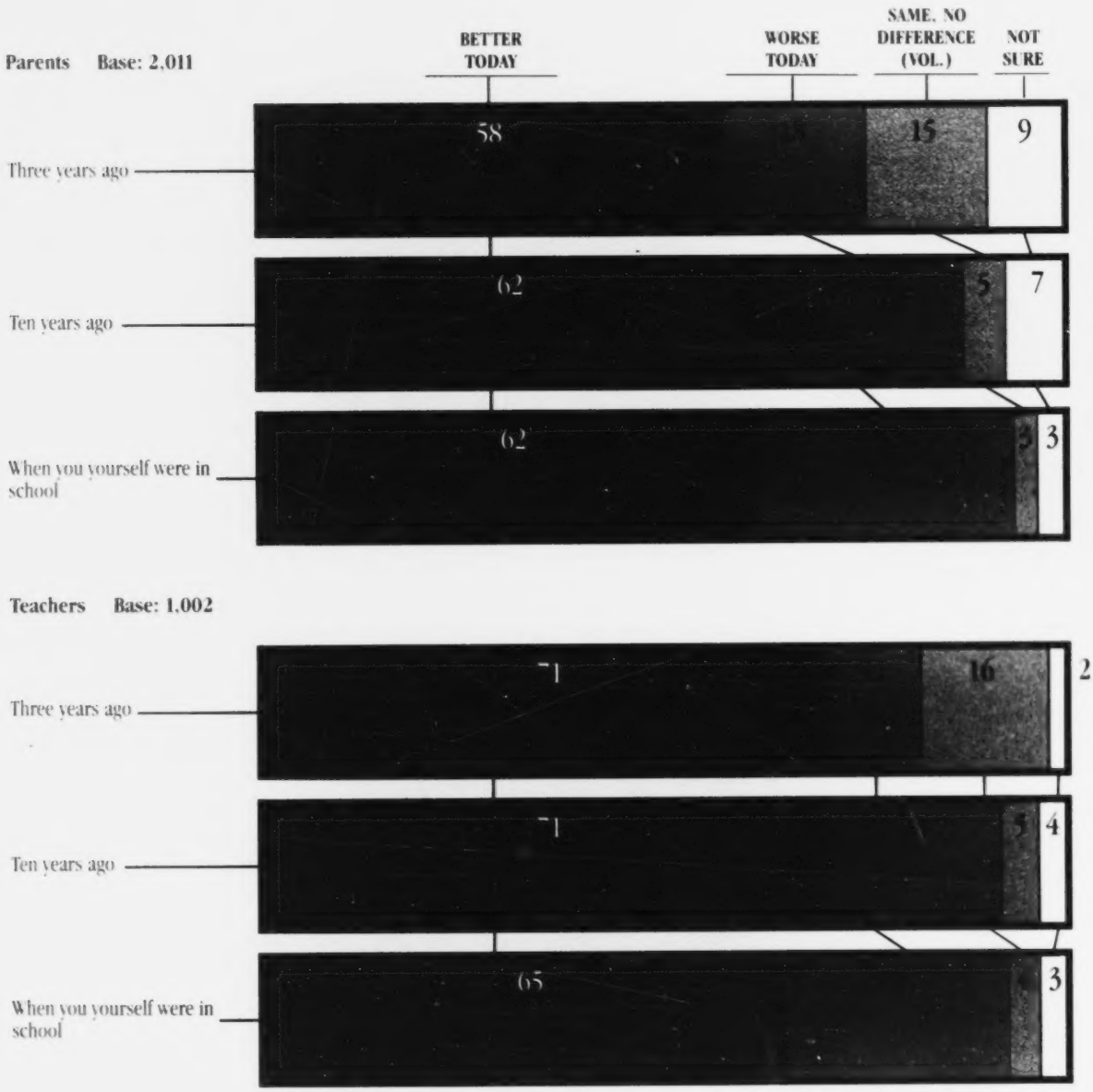


Table 2-4 *How Parents and Teachers Compare Education Today With Education in the Past*

QUESTION: **Is the education that children receive in school better today or worse today than the education that was being given? (READ EACH ITEM)**



CHAPTER 3: BARRIERS TO GREATER CONTACT BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

The survey identifies three types of barriers to better parent-teacher links. First is the degree of availability and responsiveness each party perceives on the part of the other. Second is mutual awkwardness and reluctance that exists in many cases. Third is the frequent mismatch in schedules introduced by job requirements.

Perceived Availability and Responsiveness

As noted briefly in the previous chapter, parents and teachers have quite different perceptions of one another's availability and responsiveness when they need to contact each other. In this regard parents rate teachers very highly, but teachers give parents barely positive marks. Table 3-1 looks below the surface to reveal which parents perceive the most vs. the least availability and responsiveness from teachers.

The highest ratings are given to teachers by suburban parents, parents with college degrees, and parents of elementary school children. Parents of high school students are less impressed, as are parents who themselves did not graduate from high school.

Table 3-2 shows which teachers report the most vs. the least availability and responsiveness from parents. Teachers in inner city schools and teachers in districts with below-average wealth see parents in their local area as considerably less available or responsive when they need to be contacted.

Mutual Awkwardness and Reluctance

A possible factor contributing to these differences in perceived availability and responsiveness is a feeling of awkwardness or reluctance about approaching one another. A majority of American teachers (55%) say that they have felt "uneasy or reluctant" about approaching parents to talk with them about their child (Table 3-3). Somewhat fewer parents, about one out of five, say they have felt awkward or reluctant about approaching a teacher to talk with them regarding their child (Table 3-4).

Female teachers are more likely than male teachers to have felt reluctance in approaching parents. White teachers are more likely than black teachers to say the same. And elementary teachers are more likely than high school teachers to have felt uneasy or reluctant. Reluctance is even higher outside urban areas than it is within urban areas.

Among parents the feeling of reluctance in approaching teachers seems to be a product of differences in social background. The most reluctant parents are those with income under $15,000 (24%) and those who did not themselves graduate from high school (24%). They may find it harder to relate to teachers who typically have college degrees and in many cases graduate training.

Mismatch in Schedules

Another potential barrier for some teachers and parents, which affects their availability to meet, is a mismatch in their respective schedules. A traditional time for one-on-one meetings between teachers and parents is during the school day or after school in the afternoon. And nine out of ten American teachers say that those times would be most convenient for them (Table 3-5). But only 67% of parents say that those traditional times of day would be convenient for them (Table 3-6).

One-third of public school parents across the country say they would prefer to meet in the evening, but only 9% of teachers say that would be convenient for them. If meetings need to be scheduled outside the traditional hours, teachers would prefer the morning before the school day begins rather than the evening. Parents opt for the reverse, preferring evening to morning.

Parents who are most likely to prefer evening meetings are parents who work full-time. As we saw in Chapter 1, 44% of all households with school children today contain either a single parent working full-time (15%) or else two parents who both work full-time (29%). Parents of high school aged children also prefer the evening. Teachers who are most willing to accommodate parents by meeting in the evening are younger teachers with less than five years experience, inner city teachers, and high school teachers. But even their rate of preference for evening meetings rises to less than half that of parents (13% vs. 32%).

The Need for Parents to Take Time Off From Work

Unless this mismatch in schedules can be overcome, there remains a need for working parents to occasionally take time off from work, or else forego direct contact with teachers. Over seven out of ten parents who work full-time report they have indeed taken time off from work to visit the school in the past (Table 3-7).

Table 3-1 *Which Parents Find Teachers to Be Available and Responsive*

		EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
		%	%	%	%
Total Parents	**2,011**	**38**	**38**	**16**	**8**
Child's School Level					
Elementary	898	49	34	12	5
Junior high	368	34	36	20	10
High school	503	28	43	18	11
Size of Place					
Central city	490	35	39	15	11
Rest of metro area	963	40	36	16	7
Outside metro area	558	33	42	16	9
Race					
White	1,573	39	36	16	8
Black	211	33	45	18	4
Hispanic	150	35	41	12	12
Education of Parent					
Less than high school	238	30	44	17	9
High school graduate	813	39	37	17	7
Some college	440	39	35	16	9
4-year college graduate	309	42	41	10	8
Beyond college	208	47	32	15	6
Family Status and Work Status of Parents					
One-Parent Families					
Not working	80	39	39	15	6
Work part-time	64	39	38	12	11
Work full-time	291	34	37	19	10
Two-Parent Families					
One not working	533	37	39	17	6
Both work, one part-time	417	43	35	14	9
Both work full-time	626	38	39	15	8
Family Income					
$7,500 or less	130	33	42	16	9
$7,501 to $15,000	198	33	41	18	8
$15,001 to $25,000	397	41	38	13	7
$25,001 to $35,000	420	39	36	17	7
$35,001 to $50,000	436	36	38	17	8
$50,001 and over	305	38	39	14	8

25

Table 3-2 *Which Teachers Find Parents to Be Available and Responsive*

	%	%	%	%
1,002	**16**	**38**	**34**	**12**
450	17	38	31	12
247	15	36	37	12
334	13	38	38	11
113	10	24	37	29
100	11	39	38	11
248	19	38	29	12
298	15	41	34	9
242	17	40	34	8
223	23	40	29	8
424	17	42	32	8
342	9	33	38	19
366	16	37	34	13
636	15	38	34	12
908	16	38	35	11
69	14	37	29	16
76	12	44	32	12
154	18	33	36	12
476	13	37	36	13
296	18	40	29	11
146	16	41	36	7
317	13	41	29	16
270	16	33	40	10
269	17	38	32	12

Table 3-3 *Which Teachers Have Felt Reluctant to Approach Parents*

QUESTION: **Have you ever felt uneasy or reluctant about approaching a parent to talk about their child?**

	%	%
1,002	**55**	**45**
450	58	42
247	52	48
334	48	52
113	51	49
100	48	52
248	56	44
298	56	44
242	56	44
223	53	47
424	56	44
342	55	45
366	45	55
636	59	41
908	56	44
69	44	56
76	48	52
154	58	42
476	57	43
296	51	49
146	52	48
317	59	40
270	53	47
269	51	49

Table 3-4 *Which Parents Have Felt Reluctant to Approach Teachers*

QUESTION: **Have you ever felt awkward or reluctant about approaching a teacher to talk about your child?**

	YES	NO
	%	%
2,011	**19**	**81**
898	18	81
368	18	81
503	21	79
490	20	80
963	17	83
558	20	80
1,573	19	81
211	16	84
150	21	79
238	24	75
813	19	81
440	18	82
309	14	85
208	12	88
80	20	80
64	30	70
291	16	83
533	21	79
417	17	83
626	16	83
130	21	79
198	24	76
397	20	79
420	16	83
436	19	81
305	11	89

Table 3-5 *When Different Teachers Prefer to Meet With Parents*

QUESTION: **If you needed to meet with a parent about their child, what time of day would be most convenient for you — before the school day, during the school day, after school, or in the evening?**

	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
	%	%	%	%
1,002	**26**	**31**	**58**	**9**
450	29	23	64	7
247	23	41	52	8
334	20	42	49	13
113	29	31	51	12
100	27	37	64	7
248	34	32	54	8
298	20	30	60	8
242	22	29	60	9
223	28	33	59	9
424	26	26	58	8
342	24	35	57	10
366	26	37	51	11
636	25	29	61	8
908	26	32	57	8
69	23	28	62	8
76	25	30	57	12
154	26	33	59	10
476	24	31	58	8
296	28	31	58	7
146	27	29	58	9
317	24	29	58	9
270	25	33	60	8
269	27	34	55	9

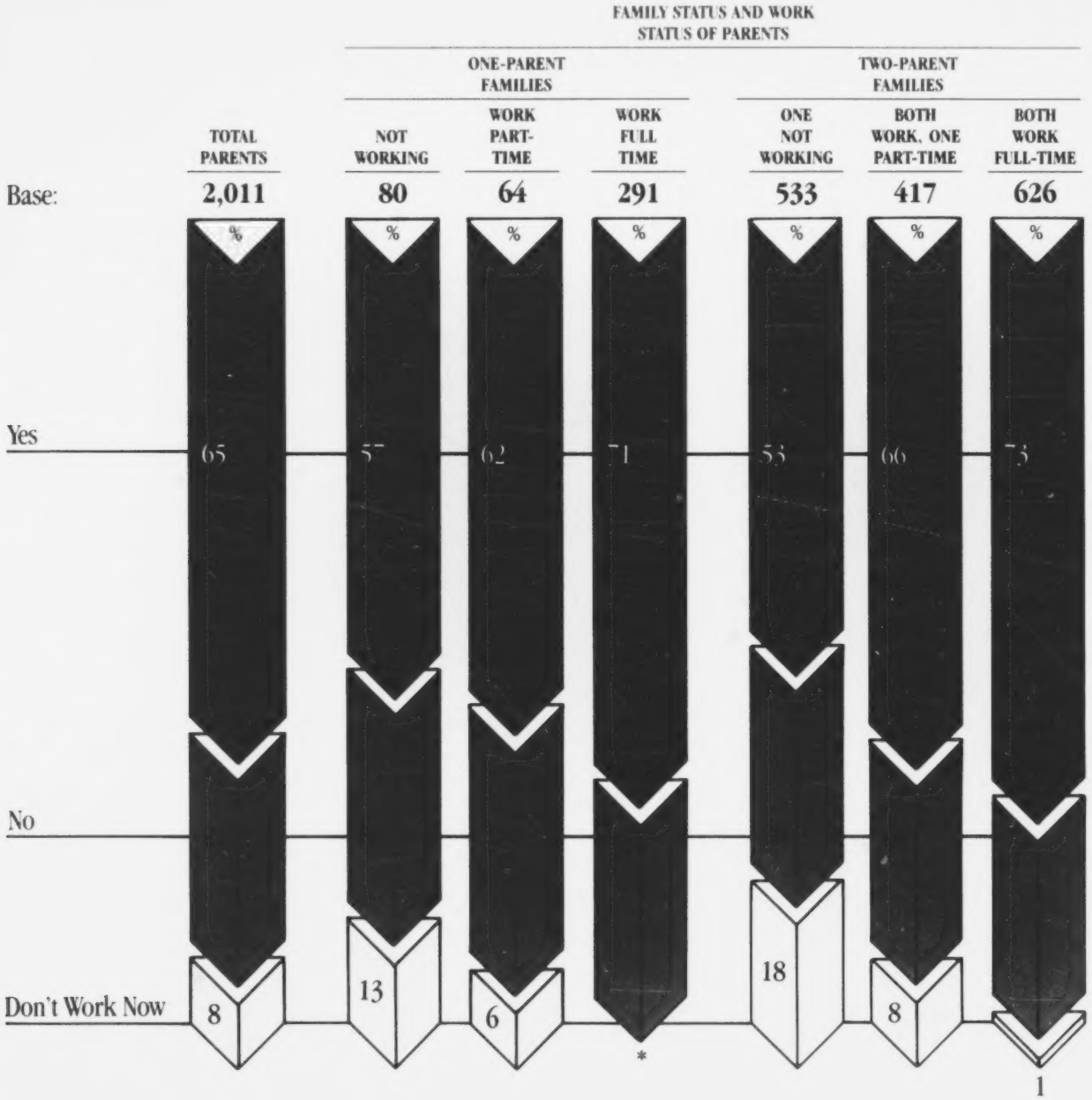
Table 3-6 *When Different Parents Prefer to Meet with Teachers*

QUESTION: **If you needed to meet with a teacher about your child, what time of day would be most convenient for you — before the school day, during the school day, after school, or in the evening?**

	BEFORE THE SCHOOL DAY	DURING THE SCHOOL DAY	AFTER SCHOOL	IN THE EVENING
	%	%	%	%
2,011	**17**	**24**	**43**	**32**
898	17	23	44	28
368	19	27	39	34
503	17	26	42	36
490	18	24	43	30
963	19	24	41	32
558	12	25	46	34
1,573	17	22	46	32
211	18	37	29	32
150	10	23	42	30
238	15	26	39	35
813	15	28	43	28
440	18	19	42	35
309	19	21	43	34
208	19	20	55	30
80	14	36	38	29
64	16	25	42	27
291	19	19	42	35
533	17	34	40	28
417	17	23	50	27
626	15	17	43	38
130	16	29	46	29
198	14	31	39	26
397	14	25	41	31
420	17	22	41	36
436	17	20	47	33
305	22	23	45	31

Table 3-7 *Parents Who Have Taken Time Off From Work to Visit the School*

QUESTION: **Have you ever taken time off from your work to visit the school?**



CHAPTER 4: DESIRED VS. ACTUAL CONTACT BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

How Much Contact and Involvement Do Parents and Teachers Want?

Parents in America are surprisingly eager, not only to be kept informed of what is happening at school, but also to be actively consulted about many school policies. And teachers in America are wide open to parental involvement in the process of education.

What Parents Want

When it comes to changes in what subjects are taught, and changes in the school's discipline policy, a majority of parents want to be actively consulted (Table 4-1). When it comes to other matters, bare majorities are satisfied just to be kept informed. But even on changes in extra-curricular activities, grading standards, class size policy, and homework policy, at least four out of ten parents still say they want to be actively consulted.

The findings seem to reflect pleas on the part of certain groups of parents who currently feel they do not receive sufficient attention from the school. For instance, central city parents are more likely than either suburban or non-metropolitan area parents to want active consultation. And single parents who work full-time are also especially likely to want consultation (Table 4-2).

Table 4-2 tallies parents' wishes in regard to all six matters and documents which parents desire the most vs. the least consultation. Some patterns are consistent with ones previously observed regarding different social backgrounds; e.g., parents with college training and with higher income are more likely to want active consultation, whereas lower income parents and parents who are not themselves high school graduates are more likely to be satisfied by just being kept informed. This is consistent with many studies on other topics over the years which have shown that people with middle class resources and skills feel more confident in dealing with institutions and are more accustomed to having their wishes heard.

Parental Involvement at Home vs. at School Itself

American parents and American teachers share a virtually identical view about where involvement can best take place (Table 4-3). A plurality of both parents and teachers say that it is important for parents to be involved at the school itself. Only one-quarter, both of parents and of teachers, say that parents should mainly be involved from home. The balance, approximately three out of ten, say involvement should occur at both home and school.

OBSERVATION: The survey shows the striking openness of American teachers to parental involvement in the process of education. Majorities or large pluralities of teachers endorse active consultation with parents on policies of the school. And teachers are just as enthusiastic as parents themselves are about having parents involved, not just from home, but even at the school itself.

What Teachers Want

American teachers divide in a way that is similar to parents — a way that shows considerable openness to parental participation. When it comes to changes in discipline policy and changes in extra-curricular activities, a majority of public school teachers think that parents should be actively consulted (Table 4-1). On other matters majorities say that parents should just be kept informed. But even when it comes to changes in what subjects are taught, class size policy, and homework policy, more than three out of ten teachers still feel that parents should be actively consulted.

Teachers are opposed to consultation when it comes to changes in grading standards. Only 40% want active consultation in this area while 57% opt for just keeping parents informed. But just 3% of teachers say parents shouldn't be involved at all in the area of grading standards.

OBSERVATION: ***The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher 1985*** **documented that teachers are willing to share responsibility with other participants in the education system. This new survey shows that such willingness extends to sharing with parents as well. In the past surveys teachers were most likely to reserve to themselves decisionmaking in purely pedagogical areas where they feel themselves to be professionals. This pattern also reveals itself in this year's survey, where teachers are least enthusiastic about consulting with parents on grading standards. But even in such a key area a large minority of teachers want to consult with parents.**

Table 4-4 tallies teachers' desires in regard to all six of the matters examined and shows which teachers support greater vs. lesser consultation with parents. The most striking pattern is that inner city teachers and other urban teachers are particularly likely to endorse consultation. This parallels the expressed desire, shown above, of central city parents themselves for greater consultation.

How Much Contact Actually Exists Now?

Parents report that they now have contact with their child's school through a variety of channels. The most frequently reported is attendance at a play, sports event, or concert at the school. Fifty percent of parents say they do this more than three times a year (Table 4-5). It is clear that such extra-curricular events can be an important draw in attracting parents to the school. But such encounters do not usually offer much chance to discuss either individual student problems or more general issues of school policy.

The next most frequent channel, according to parents, is meeting in person with a teacher or school official one-on-one. Forty-one percent of parents say this happens more than three times a year. In most cases this probably involves the traditional teacher-parent chat about the progress of the individual child.

The third most frequent channel is to "go in to the school to hear about and discuss school issues and see the school environment." This, presumably, gets closer to the kind of active consultation about school policy that many parents say they want. Thirty-five percent of parents say this happens more than three times a year. But a nearly equal size group (32%) say it happens only once a year or less.

The least utilized channels are talking on the telephone or exchanging written notes with a teacher or school official, and attending meetings of a parents' group such as the PTA. Since meetings of organized parents' groups could potentially involve their members in policy discussions, their relatively limited usage is a striking finding.

Who Is Most Involved vs. Least Involved

Some parents have more involvement with the school than others. Those reporting the most contact with their child's school include: parents of elementary school children, parents who have college training, and parents with higher income (Table 4-6). Considerably less contact with the school is reported by parents who have children of high school age, by parents who have lower income, and by parents who themselves had a limited formal education.

Four Descriptions of Involvement With the School

Over seven in ten parents and a similar proportion of teachers agree that their school does a "good job" of encouraging parental involvement. This applies to involvement in both educational areas as well as non-subject areas like sports and the arts (Table 4-7). But a minority of from one-fifth to one-quarter disputes that a good job is being done. And 55% of parents, plus nearly a quarter of teachers, say that their school only contacts parents when there is a problem with their child. Secondary school parents particularly agree with that criticism.

Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction With the Frequency of Contact

Most parents seem generally satisfied with the frequency of contact they currently have with their child's school. Eighty-five percent of parents say they are "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied," with the "verys" outnumbering the "somewhats" (Table 4-8). Once again, parents of elementary school children stand out; they are the most satisfied.

But some categories of parents show much less satisfaction. Most likely to be dissatisfied are: secondary school parents, central city parents, and single parents who work full time.

Teachers on the whole report themselves to be somewhat less satisfied than do parents. Seventy-eight percent of teachers say they are satisfied with the frequency of contact they have with their students' parents, and in this case the "verys" are outnumbered by the "somewhats" (Table 4-9). Elementary school teachers are the most satisfied, along with teachers in districts of above average wealth, women, and teachers with 20 years or more experience.

Most likely to be dissatisfied are: high school teachers, inner city and other urban teachers, men, those in districts with below average wealth, and new teachers with the least experience.

OBSERVATION: It is not so surprising to see a pattern of declining contact between parents and teacher as the child progresses from lower grade levels to higher grade levels. However, it is surprising that hand in hand with this pattern goes rising dissatisfaction over the frequency of contact. This dissatisfaction, while never reaching large proportions, clearly rises on the part of parents as well as teachers between the elementary grades and the high school level. A second pattern exists that seems to distinguish better off vs. worse off districts. Teachers who work in wealthier districts and parents who themselves have college training seem to have more contact with one another and to report themselves as more satisfied.

Table 4-1 *Whether Parents Should be "Actively Consulted" or Not*

QUESTION: **When it comes to (READ EACH ITEM) do you think that parents should be actively consulted, or just be kept informed, or not be involved at all?**

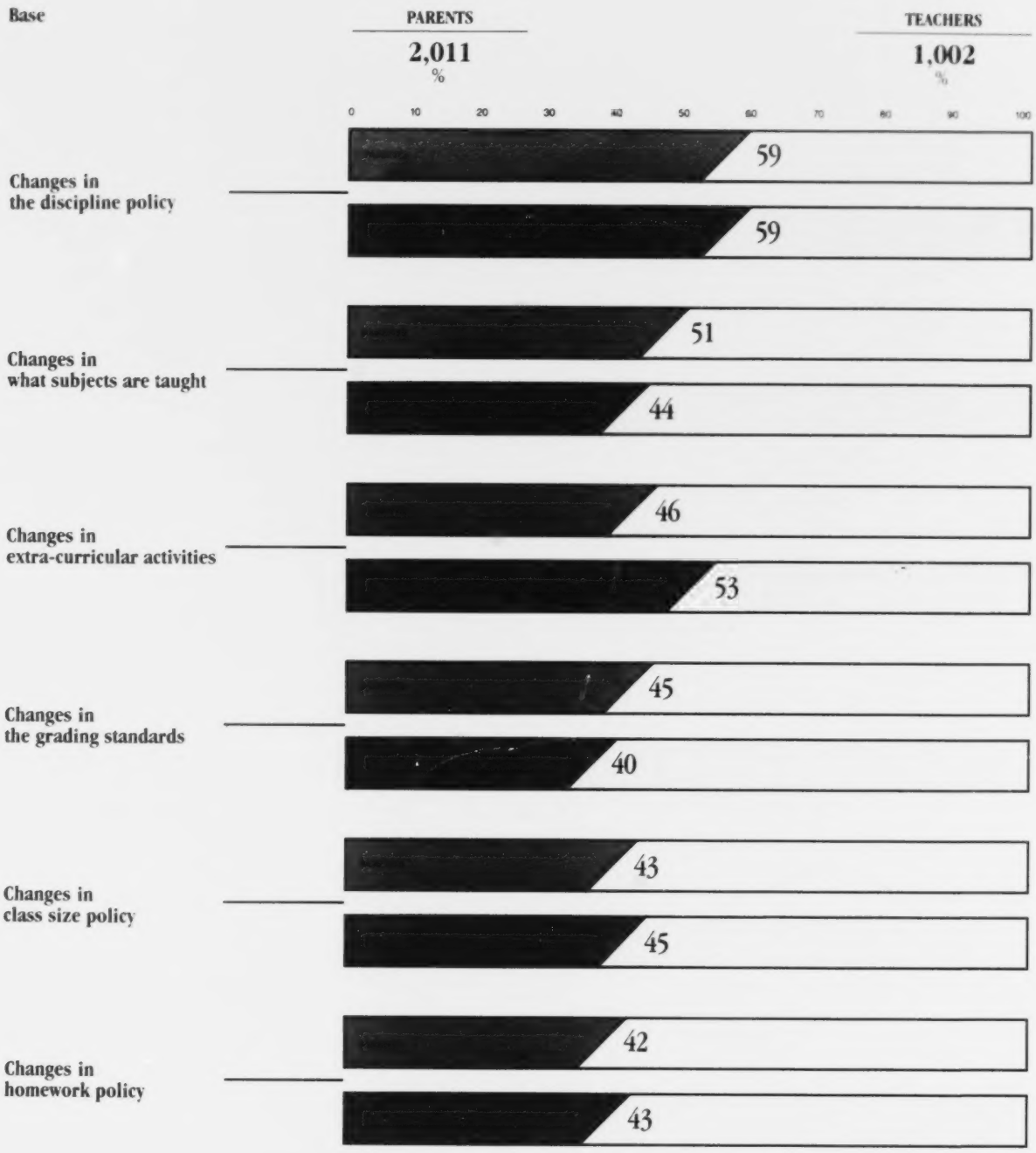


Table 4-2 *Degree of Active Consultation Desired by Parents*

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
	%	%	%
2,011	**34**	**39**	**28**
898	30	42	29
368	38	36	26
503	34	36	30
490	32	37	31
963	31	41	28
558	39	37	25
1,573	33	39	28
211	38	32	30
150	27	46	27
238	37	39	24
813	35	38	26
440	32	38	31
309	31	37	32
208	26	41	34
80	39	34	27
64	38	38	24
291	31	38	31
533	37	36	27
417	30	42	28
626	33	40	27
130	41	36	23
198	35	38	27
397	33	40	27
420	31	38	30
436	34	38	28
305	29	39	33

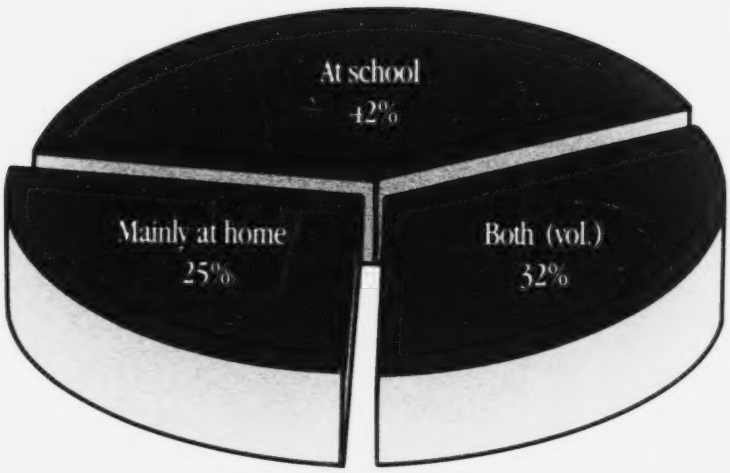
Table 4-3 *Whether Parents Should Be Involved at the School Itself*

QUESTION: **In general, when parents are involved with education, do you think it is important for parents to be involved *at the school* itself, or should parents mainly be involved at *home*?**

PARENTS

Base 2,011

%



TEACHERS

Base 1,002

%

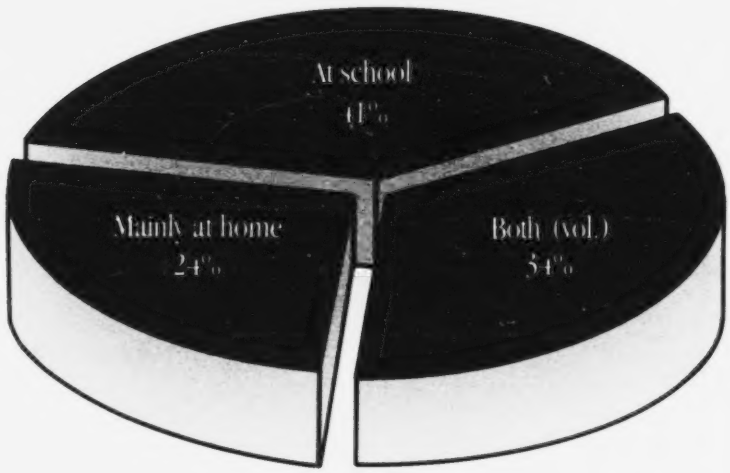


Table 4-4 *Degree of Active Consultation Desired by Teachers*

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
	%	%	%
1,002	**31**	**44**	**25**
450	28	45	27
247	33	42	25
334	36	40	24
113	23	44	33
100	24	44	31
248	32	45	24
298	32	44	24
242	36	42	23
223	32	40	28
424	29	46	25
342	32	43	24
366	34	38	27
636	30	46	25
908	31	44	25
69	30	41	29
76	19	54	27
154	34	44	22
476	30	44	27
296	35	40	24
146	31	48	20
317	32	42	26
270	28	46	26
269	33	40	27

Table 4-5 *How Often Parents Report Actual Involvement With the School*

QUESTION: **How often do you (READ EACH ITEM) — never, once a year, 2 or 3 times per year, or more than 3 times per year?**

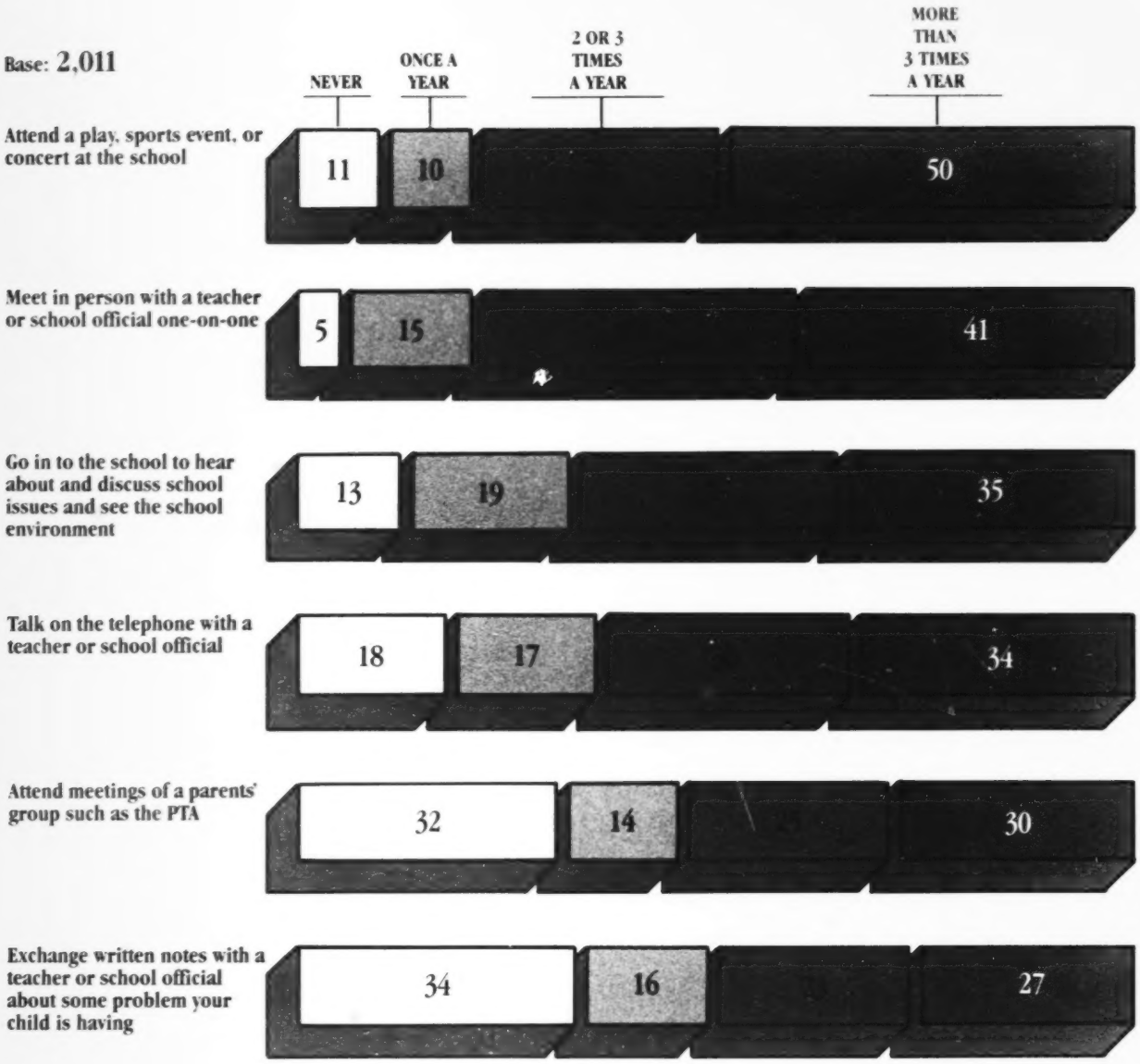


Table 4-6 *Which Parents Are Most Involved and Least Involved*

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
	%	%	%
2,011	**27**	**52**	**21**
898	20	53	26
368	27	52	22
503	36	51	13
490	27	48	25
963	25	53	23
558	30	54	16
1,573	26	53	21
211	26	47	27
150	27	55	18
238	39	46	16
813	29	52	19
440	22	55	23
309	15	59	26
208	13	54	33
80	37	51	12
64	33	54	14
291	30	47	22
533	28	48	23
417	26	53	21
626	21	57	22
130	46	39	15
198	32	52	16
397	25	56	19
420	26	54	21
436	24	52	25
305	16	54	29

Table 4-7 *Parents and Teachers Evaluate Four Descriptions of Parental Involvement at Their School*

QUESTION: **Tell me whether you agree or disagree with each statement about *your* school.**

	PERCENT AGREEING			
		LEVEL OF SCHOOL		
	TOTAL	ELEMENTARY	JUNIOR HIGH	HIGH SCHOOL
[illegible]				
Parents	77	76	74	79
Teachers	77	73	77	86
[illegible]				
Parents	73	82	71	64
Teachers	80	84	78	70
[illegible]				
Parents	55	46	62	63
Teachers	23	18	22	33
[illegible]				
Parents	22	18	22	28
Teachers	8	8	12	7

Table 4-8 *How Satisfied Do Parents Feel About Frequency of Contact With Teachers and School*

QUESTION: **How satisfied are you with the *frequency of contact* you have with your child's teachers and school — very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?**

		VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
		%	%	%	%
Total Parents	**2,011**	**53**	**32**	**10**	**5**
Child's School Level					
Elementary	898	62	28	7	3
Junior High	368	46	35	14	5
High school	503	44	35	15	6
Size of Place					
Central city	490	47	31	13	7
Rest of metro area	963	54	31	10	4
Outside metro area	558	55	33	8	4
Race					
White	1,573	51	33	11	5
Black	211	58	30	9	3
Hispanic	150	58	25	8	9
Education of Parent					
Less than high school	238	52	32	10	5
High school graduate	813	51	34	10	4
Some college	440	50	29	13	6
College graduate	309	56	31	9	4
Graduate study	208	60	25	9	4
Family Status and Work Status of Parents					
One-Parent Families					
Not working	80	59	26	11	4
Work part time	64	62	26	7	4
Work full time	291	52	28	13	6
Two-Parent Families					
Both not working	533	51	35	8	5
Both work, one part time	417	54	33	10	3
Both work full time	626	51	32	12	4
Family Income					
Under $10,000	130	60	23	9	8
$10,001 to $15,000	198	54	29	10	7
$15,001 to $25,000	397	52	34	11	3
$25,001 to $35,000	420	50	34	10	5
$35,001 to $50,000	436	51	34	11	4
$50,001 and over	305	52	32	11	5

Table 4-9 *How Satisfied Do Teachers Feel About Frequency of Contact With Parents*

QUESTION: **How satisfied are you with the *frequency of contact* you have with your students' parents — very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?**

		VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
		%	%	%	%
Total Teachers	**1,002**	**33**	**45**	**18**	**4**
Type of School					
Elementary	450	39	43	14	3
Junior high	247	29	46	18	7
High school	334	23	48	24	5
Size of Place					
Inner city	113	25	46	23	6
Other urban	100	26	47	22	5
Suburban	248	38	45	13	4
Small town	298	30	46	21	3
Rural	242	38	44	15	3
District Wealth					
Above average	223	41	44	12	3
Average for state	424	35	46	15	4
Below average	342	25	45	24	5
Sex of Teacher					
Male	366	27	44	24	6
Female	636	36	46	15	3
Race of Teacher					
White	908	34	45	17	4
Black	69	26	49	20	4
Teaching Experience					
Less than 5 years	76	25	44	26	5
5 to 9 years	154	29	52	15	4
10 to 19 years	476	32	44	20	4
20 years or more	296	40	43	13	3
Training of Teacher					
College graduate	146	37	49	11	2
Some graduate credit	317	30	46	20	4
Master's completed	270	31	49	16	3
Beyond master's	269	37	39	19	5

CHAPTER 5: FORGING STRONGER LINKS BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

Parents and teachers agree on many of the specific steps that might be valuable in linking home and school, but they disagree on others. Their patterns of agreement and disagreement reveal the preferred types of greater involvement that each has in mind.

Who Can Take the First Step

While there is a consensus that teachers can take the first step to increase parental involvement, parents are significantly less confident that this is appropriate (Table 5-1). A quarter of parents think that only parents can take the first step. Black parents are especially likely to think so.

Steps Toward Involvement on Which There Is Consensus

Parents and teachers alike endorse a role for parents that includes volunteer work, supportive activities, and promotional efforts. For instance, both parents and teachers support the idea of "providing parents with information and materials to support or reinforce what is being taught at school." Approximately seven in ten teachers and parents at all grade levels say this would be valuable (Table 5-2). Likewise, both parents and teachers strongly endorse the idea of "having parents do volunteer work to help out the school." Six in ten or more of both teachers and parents at all grade levels say this would be a valuable step. And a majority of both teachers and parents endorse the idea of "involving parents as promoters and fund raisers for the school."

Steps Toward Involvement on Which There Is Disagreement

But teachers and parents part company over two other possible proposals that might also increase the potential involvement between home and school. A majority of parents endorse the idea of involving parents on "a management team to determine school policies." However, only 26% of teachers favor this idea. Likewise, a near majority of parents (47%) endorse the idea of placing parents "on committees that decide the curriculum of the school." However, only 18% of teachers are willing to go along with this proposal.

OBSERVATION: These findings reveal that teachers and parents have somewhat different things in mind when they equally favor parental involvement inside the school itself. From the teachers' point of view that involvement would include volunteer work, various supportive activities, and promotional efforts, but would stop short of any large parental role in decisionmaking over curriculum or school policies. Many teachers are very willing to consult with parents, but hesitate to place them in control. This is quite consistent with the tendency of

teachers throughout this series of surveys* to feel strongly about — and, indeed, to want to increase — their professional role in those areas which they consider to be mainly pedagogical in nature.

From the parents' point of view, however, many are interested in the entire gamut of possible involvements, including many who would favor placing parents on curriculum committees and management teams with decisionmaking power. This is a surprisingly strong expressed preference from parents to be involved in all facets of education.

Disagreement Over the Need for Outreach

There are several other proposals which are endorsed by parents but which receive much less support from teachers. "Distributing a newsletter to keep parents informed about what's happening in school" is supported by 68% of all parents and by 80% of Hispanic parents, who may feel particularly out of touch with the school. But only a bare majority of teachers (51%) think that a newsletter would help a lot. Sixty-four percent of all parents and 75% of low income parents favor "establishing a homework hotline which students can call for advice on how to deal with a homework assignment." But only 42% of teachers think such a hotline would help a lot.

Sixty percent of all parents favor "having the school give more guidance to teachers about how to involve parents better in the future," and black parents especially agree (72%). But only 41% of teachers believe this type of outreach training would help a lot (Table 5-3).

OBSERVATION: It is apparent that teachers place particular priority on measures that would result in parents better performing their role in supervising the educational progress of their child. While parents concur in this need, they also stress that the school needs to do other things — like establishing newsletters and homework hotlines — to aid parents in their task.

Teachers seem to see less urgency for such outreach activities. This could be because they suspect that teachers would be required to undertake additional responsibility without any additional pay or relief from other duties. However, parents — particularly low income and minority parents — feel a need for such outreach, regardless of who might in the end assume responsibility for actually implementing it.

*The Metropolitan Life Surveys of the American Teacher 1984, 1985, and 1986.

Other Steps to Improve Education by Linking Home and School

Both teachers and parents endorse certain other steps that could join home with school in an attempt to improve education. The most popular with parents is "having the school notify the parents immediately about any problems involving their child" (Table 5-3). Eighty-eight percent of parents think this would help a lot. Even parents who do not want to be actively consulted or involved at the school nonetheless do strongly desire to be kept informed. Seventy-seven percent of teachers agree that this step would help a lot, even though it is not their top-ranked measure. These levels of support constitute a virtual mandate for school systems to initiate some type of notification system.

Parents and teachers both strongly favor measures that would result in parents better performing their role in nurturing their child and in backing up the work of the school. Overwhelming majorities of both parents and teachers endorse "having parents limit television until all homework is finished" and "having parents spend much more time with their children in support of school and teachers." The latter is the top-ranked step in the eyes of teachers, 84% of whom believe it would help a lot.

Home Involvement Through Parental Choice Between Schools

An ultimate form of parent power in education would be the ability to walk away from a school perceived as unresponsive, taking the child elsewhere. Now this usually requires moving one's residence to another area or resorting to private schools. But it could occur even within a given public school system if parents were given the chance to choose between several different public schools for their child.

Some observers have predicted beneficial effects from such a system, which could put the parent in the role of a consumer making buying decisions and could place the school in the role of a seller of services in a competitive market. This section examines how much enthusiasm currently exists for using such a system and what consequences are presently perceived as likely to flow from such a system.

Which Parents Would Consider Changing Schools

One-quarter of parents say that, if they had a choice, they would seriously think about choosing a different school (Table 5-4). This constitutes a large initial constituency for choice and change. Approximately three-quarters say they are satisfied with their present school.

The most satisfied parents are those living in non-metropolitan areas and those with children in elementary school. The least satisfied groups are those living in central cities and single parents who work.

But the constituency for choice and change is not confined just to certain groups. It is present in all parts of the country and at all levels of society. This is because the minority who would opt for change, if given a choice, constitute from 20% to 30% of every demographic grouping in the survey.

How Teachers Perceive Parents' Sentiment

The vast majority of teachers correctly perceive where the preponderance of parental opinion currently lies (Table 5-5). Eighty-one percent of American teachers say they think that "most" parents would probably be satisfied with their current school; just 15% think that "most" parents would think seriously about choosing a different school.

Two groups of teachers stand out as being somewhat more likely than others to think that most parents would want to switch schools. They are urban teachers and black teachers. They may be correctly describing opinion in their particular local areas.

Perceived Consequences of Parental Choice

Parents as well as teachers see both beneficial results and some undesirable effects as likely to flow from a system of choice between schools (Table 5-6). The likely benefits include:

- A child could go to the school best suited for his or her needs
- Competition to attract students would force schools to improve
- Having a choice of schools would raise the involvement of parents

The negative consequences perceived by both teachers and parents include:

- Richer children would end up at better schools and poorer children would end up at others
- Some schools would be unpopular and children going there would lose out

Parents and teachers are closely split over whether in such a system a school would lose its identity with its local neighborhood. A slight majority of teachers believes this would happen, but less than a majority of parents thinks so. Elementary school parents see this neighborhood identity issue no differently from high school parents.

Parents who say that, if given a choice, they would seriously think about choosing a new school are particularly likely to see benefits coming from such a system.

OBSERVATION: It is hard to get reactions to hypothetical future situations. Advance impressions may or may not correspond to judgments formed on the basis of actual experience. In this case, teacher's impressions are probably more reliable.

Pre-School Daycare and Other Additional Uses of School Facilities

Parents and teachers both support additional uses of school facilities that could better integrate the school into the community, thus further linking home and school (Table 5-7). Over seven in ten of both parents and teachers strongly approve of "using school facilities to offer night classes for adults in many different subjects." And approximately six in ten parents and teachers strongly approve of "using school facilities to organize special activities for the elderly" and of "using school facilities to organize extra-curricular activities for students after school."

But use of school facilities for pre-school daycare programs takes much lower priority among both teachers and parents. Only about four in ten strongly support "using some of the school's facilities to organize daycare centers for pre-school children." Black parents, however, are much more supportive of the idea (65%) than are parents in general.

The relatively lesser priority placed by parents and teachers on pre-school programs connected with public school is underlined by Table 5-8. The table shows the support that exists for making special educational efforts on behalf of several populations of children in need. It reveals that three types of children are placed ahead of pre-schoolers.

Less than a majority of parents, and considerably less than a majority of teachers, think that education would be improved a lot through "beginning the educational process earlier by enrolling students in pre-school education programs" or through providing "daycare programs with an educational component after the regular school hours."

But parents are somewhat more sympathetic than teachers to daycare. And black parents particularly support pre-school and daycare programs. Seventy-three percent of black parents support pre-school educational programs, and 64% of black parents support daycare programs after school hours.

OBSERVATION: Parents as well as teachers affirm that the school is a major resource for the neighborhood and an integral part of community. They therefore endorse a wider usage of school facilities that go beyond the traditional uses in many locales. They seem to feel less so, however, when it comes to daycare for pre-school children. Perhaps they see daycare as less of a public, as opposed to private, responsibility. Perhaps they think that schools should do a better job of dealing with their current charges before expanding their scope to pre-schoolers. Perhaps they see the school as being best equipped and suited for dealing with children of school age rather than pre-schoolers, who may benefit from being taken care of separately from older children. Or perhaps they are simply thinking about distance and travel time between home or work and a convenient daycare center.

Educational Programs for Several Other Types of Children in Need

Enthusiasm is high for making greater educational efforts for several types of children in need. These efforts could further serve to link home and school in these special cases.

Parents and teachers overwhelmingly support the provision of special counseling and services for "children with emotional, mental, social, or family problems." There is also very strong support for school programs to involve parents, as well as members of the community, with "students who have special needs." A majority of parents and a near majority of teachers think that developing educational programs for "students who are frequently absent from school" would also help a lot.

In previous surveys in this series, teachers have shown great enthusiasm for additional support services within the school system.* It is now clear that parents also lend to this their voice and backing.

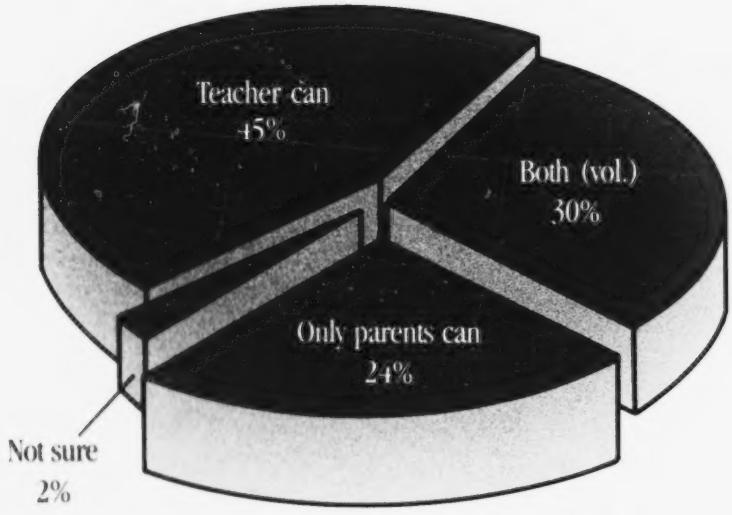
**The Metropolitan Life Surveys of the American Teacher 1984* and *1986*.

Table 5-1 *Whether Teachers Can Take the First Step to Involve Parents*

QUESTION: **In trying to increase the involvement of parents with the school, do you think that the *teacher* can take the first step, or can only *parents* take the first step?**

PARENTS

Base: **2,011**
%



TEACHERS

Base: **1,002**
%

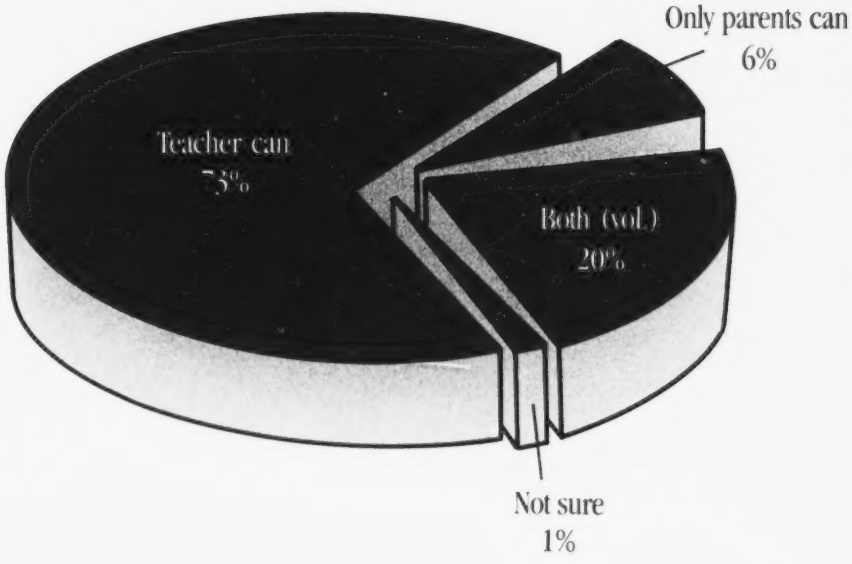


Table 5-2 *Links With School That Parents and Teachers Think Would Be "Very Valuable"*

QUESTION: **Here are some possible ways that parents might be involved with the school. For each tell me how valuable you think it would be — very valuable, somewhat valuable, not too valuable, or not valuable at all.**

		%	%	%
	74	80	69	68
	69	73	65	64
	67	72	66	61
	68	74	64	57
	53	58	51	45
	63	70	52	57
	51	53	51	50
	26	28	25	25
	47	47	46	47
	18	17	20	19

Table 5-3 *Steps That Parents and Teachers Think Would "Help a Lot" to Improve Education*

QUESTION: **Here are some things that might possibly improve education. For each tell me whether you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all to improve education.**

	2,011 %	1,573 %	211 %	150 %	1,002 %
	88	88	89	88	77
	79	77	86	83	80
	70	69	73	69	84
	68	66	71	80	51
	64	62	70	72	42
	60	57	72	61	41
	58	56	71	62	52

Table 5-4 *Which Parents Would Consider Changing Schools*

QUESTION: **Suppose you could *choose* between *several* different public schools for your child. Would you probably be satisfied with your *present* school, or would you think seriously about choosing a *different* school?**

	%	%
2,011	**74**	**24**
898	78	20
368	70	29
503	71	27
490	68	30
963	74	24
558	79	19
1,573	74	24
211	71	26
150	76	23
238	73	25
813	76	22
440	70	28
309	76	22
208	71	25
80	74	25
64	66	30
291	67	32
533	74	20
417	76	23
626	74	23
130	72	25
198	75	23
397	74	25
420	74	24
436	72	25
305	77	22

Table 5-5 *Which Teachers Believe Parents Would Change Schools*

QUESTION **Suppose that parents could *choose* between *several* different public schools for their child. Do you think that most parents would probably be satisfied with their *present* school, or would most parents think seriously about choosing a *different* school?**

		BELIEVE MOST PARENTS SATISFIED WITH PRESENT SCHOOL	BELIEVE MOST PARENTS SERIOUSLY THINK ABOUT OTHER	NOT SURE, DEPENDS
		%	%	%
Total Teachers	**1,002**	**81**	**15**	**4**
Type of School				
Elementary	450	83	13	4
Junior high	247	76	19	5
High school	334	80	16	3
Size of Place				
Inner city	113	76	17	7
Other urban	100	71	29	—
Suburban	248	80	16	5
Small town	298	85	12	3
Rural	242	85	11	5
District Wealth				
Above average	223	86	11	2
Average for state	424	82	14	4
Below average	342	77	19	3
Sex of Teacher				
Male	366	82	16	2
Female	636	81	15	4
Race of Teacher				
White	908	82	14	4
Black	69	68	25	7
Teaching Experience				
Less than 5 years	76	81	16	4
5 to 9 years	154	79	16	5
10 to 19 years	476	81	17	3
20 years or more	296	83	12	5
Training of Teacher				
College graduate	146	81	18	1
Some graduate credit	317	81	15	5
Master's completed	270	82	14	4
Beyond master's	269	82	14	4

Table 5-6 *Consequences That Parents and Teachers Think "Probably Would Happen" if Parents Had Choice of Schools*

QUESTION: **Here are some things that might happen if parents *were* given a choice between several different public schools for their child. For each tell me if you think it probably would happen, or probably would not happen.**

	PARENTS		
	TOTAL PARENTS	THOSE PARENTS WHO WOULD SERIOUSLY THINK ABOUT CHOOSING A NEW SCHOOL	TOTAL TEACHERS
Base:	**2,011** %	**478** %	**1,002** %
Having a choice of schools would mean that a child could go to the school best suited for his or her individual needs	71	79	66
Richer children would end up at better schools and poorer children would end up at others	70	70	75
Some schools would be unpopular and children going there would lose out	69	67	75
Competition between schools to attract students would force schools to improve	69	76	69
Having a choice between schools would raise the involvement of parents in their child's education	62	67	63
Having a choice between schools would mean that a school would lose its identity with the local community	48	44	52

Table 5-7 *Additional Uses of Public School Facilities That are "Strongly Approved"*

QUESTION: **Here are some additional ways to utilize the public schools that might possibly benefit the community. For each tell me if you approve strongly, approve somewhat, disapprove somewhat, or disapprove strongly.**

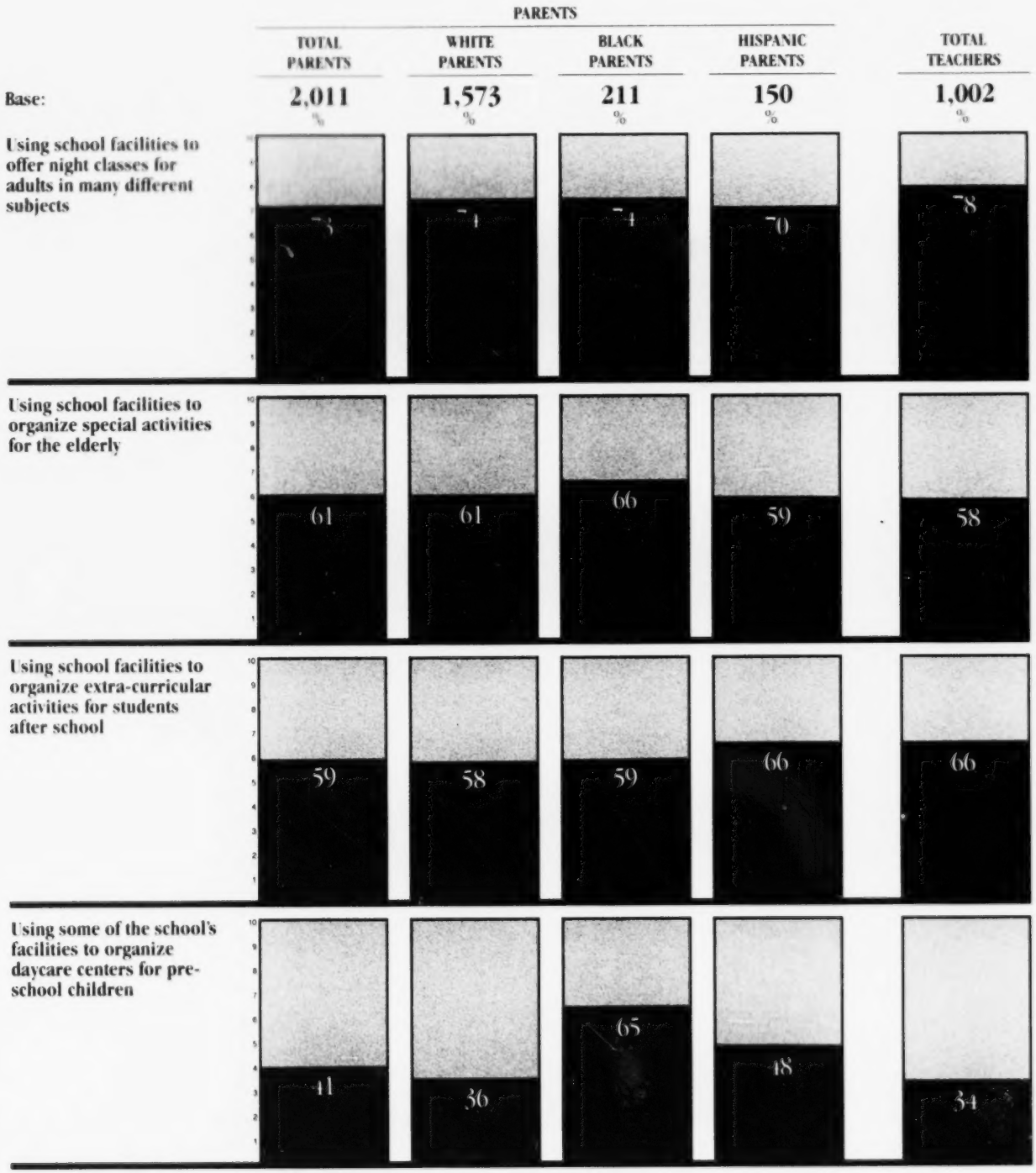


Table 5-8 *Steps That Might Improve Education By Aiding Children in Need*

QUESTION: **Here are some more things that might possibly improve education. For each tell me whether you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all to improve education.**

	2,011 %	1,573 %	211 %	150 %	1,002 %
	80	79	85	84	81
	73	72	76	72	67
	62	60	73	62	53
	54	53	57	61	44
	49	43	73	55	31
	40	39	49	40	41
	39	33	64	50	24

CHAPTER 6: ATTACKING TWO PROBLEMS THAT NEED COOPERATION FROM HOME AND SCHOOL

Teachers View Major Causes of Students' Difficulties

Teachers were asked to rank seven possible causes of students' having difficulty in school. The types of causes covered a wide range of economic factors, demographic factors, home-based factors, and school-based factors. American teachers single out as the number one cause "children who are left on their own after school" (Table 6-1).

In the eyes of teachers "children who are left on their own after school" comes out ahead of even such important contributing conditions as "poverty in the student's home," which was ranked second out of seven, and "single parent families," which was ranked fifth. High school teachers are somewhat more likely than other teachers to cite poverty, plus "automatic promotion," which ranked third overall.

It is clear that teachers give priority and urgency to not leaving students on their own. In an earlier table in Chapter 2 (Table 2-3) teachers listed as their topmost criticism of parents that many "leave their children alone too much on their own after school." The connotations of youngsters being alone no doubt include the specters of the streets, bad company, alcohol, drugs, pregnancy, and other possible consequences that can seriously affect both school and family.

Which Children Are Most Likely to Be Left on Their Own

Forty-one percent of parents say that their child is sometimes on his or her own between the end of school and 5:30 p.m. (Table 6-2). Twenty-four of the 41% say almost every day, while 17 of the 41% say one or two days per week.

Junior high and high school age children are the most likely to be on their own. Other types who are likely include more black children than white, and more children of parents who work full-time than of those who do not. But this problem is ***not*** confined to certain groups of families; it exists at ***all*** economic levels of society and in ***all*** geographical locations throughout the country.

Willingness to Utilize After-School Programs

A majority of parents express willingness to utilize an after-school program organized for students by the school. This includes 62% who say they would use an educational type program, and 75% who say they would use a non-educational type program of recreation or extra-curricular activities (Table 6-3).

Interest is not confined just to parents who work or who currently have children on their own, although it is understandably higher among them. A majority of all parents say they would be willing to pay for such a program in the event that the school budget could not afford it. Families with greater ability to pay are particularly willing, but even among low income families a majority say they are willing to pay for an educational program after school.

THE AMERICAN TEACHER

Who Sees Drop-Outs as a Problem in Their School

A different problem also requiring cooperation of home and school is the problem of students dropping out of school. Sixty-two percent of parents and 49% of teachers say drop-outs are at least a minor problem at their school (Table 6-4).

But the problem is most severe at the high school level. One-fifth of high school teachers and parents of high schoolers call drop-outs a "major problem" in their school.

Parents most likely to see drop-outs as a major problem include those who themselves did not graduate from high school. Teachers most likely to see drop-outs as a major problem include those working in districts of below average wealth.

Support for Steps to Prevent Drop-Outs

When parents evaluate six steps that might help to prevent drop-outs, they place at the top of the list "providing more vocational education and job training" (78% say it would help a lot) and "having the school inform parents immediately about any absence or truancy" (78% say this would also help a lot). When teachers evaluate the same six steps, they choose as the top two exactly the same ones that parents choose. Teachers, however, are somewhat more cautious about just how much each measure could be expected to help, and high school teachers are most cautious of all. (Figures are shown in Table 6-5 and Table 6-6.)

OBSERVATION: While the problem of children alone on their own after school affects all grade levels, all locales and all levels of society, the problem of drop-outs is more confined. Accordingly, the solutions are also more focused and more narrowly aimed. The solution for drop-outs, according to both parents and teachers, are more job training, better job opportunities, additional college scholarships, and other increased incentives for students to finish school. Some of these measures can potentially be influenced by home and school, but some of them will also require outside help from other institutions and from the wider society beyond home and school.

Table 6-1 *Teachers View "Major Causes" of Students' Difficulties*

QUESTION: **Do you think that (READ EACH ITEM) are a major cause, a minor cause, or not a cause of students' having difficulty in school?**

BASE	TOTAL TEACHERS	WEALTH OF DISTRICT: ABOVE AVERAGE	WEALTH OF DISTRICT: AVERAGE FOR STATE	WEALTH OF DISTRICT: BELOW AVERAGE
	1,002 %	192 %	356 %	277 %
Children who are left on their own after school	51	54	52	48
Poverty in the student's home	47	41	44	55
Automatic promotion	44	36	46	48
Teachers not adapting to individual student needs	43	40	46	40
Single parent families	42	46	43	40
Boring curriculum	34	29	36	34
Families where both parents work full-time	25	25	26	25

Table 6-2 *Which Children Are Most Likely to Be Left on Their Own After School*

QUESTION: **How often is your child *on his/her own* between the end of school and 5:30 p.m. — never, 1 or 2 days a week, or almost every day?**

	%	%	%
2,011	**58**	**17**	**24**
898	75	13	12
368	53	17	30
503	40	21	38
490	58	14	26
963	59	17	23
558	57	19	24
1,573	59	17	23
211	51	17	31
150	62	15	21
238	59	11	29
813	63	16	21
440	52	22	25
309	56	17	26
208	52	25	22
80	68	9	23
64	48	17	35
291	45	14	40
533	74	13	12
417	60	26	13
626	49	18	32
130	59	12	28
198	58	11	29
397	60	15	24
420	60	22	17
436	57	18	24
305	52	21	26

Table 6-3 *Willingness of Parents to Utilize After-School Programs for Children*

QUESTION: **If his/her school provided an *educational* program for him/her from after school until 5:30 p.m., would he/she never use it, use it 1 or 2 days a week, or use it almost every day?**

QUESTION: **And if his/her school provided a *non-educational* program of recreation or extra-curricular activities after school until 5:30 p.m., would he/she never use it, use it 1 or 2 days a week, or use it almost every day?**

QUESTION: **Suppose that the school budget could not afford to pay for these kind of after-school programs. Would you be willing to pay for an *educational* program after school, or not?**

QUESTION: **Would you be willing to pay for a *non-educational* after-school program of recreation or extra-curricular activities, or not?**

	2,011	829	80	64	291	533	417	626
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	62	66	61	82	66	55	58	65
	59	80	58	55	64	55	54	63
	75	58	68	81	79	72	73	77
	52	53	41	42	57	47	48	59

Table 6-4 *Which Parents and Teachers See Drop-Outs as a Problem in Their School*

QUESTION: **At your school is the problem of students dropping out a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem?**

	%	%	%
2,011	**18**	**44**	**32**
898	15	33	45
368	17	46	31
503	22	56	18
1,573	16	47	32
211	23	36	36
150	23	39	35
238	26	38	28
813	16	46	31
440	15	47	33
309	16	41	39
208	13	47	36
1,002	**9**	**40**	**50**
450	6	25	67
247	9	53	37
334	17	61	22
223	5	41	54
424	6	42	51
342	16	37	46

Table 6-5 *Steps That Parents Think Would "Help a Lot" to Prevent Drop-Outs*

QUESTION: **Here are some things that might possibly help to prevent teenagers from *dropping out* of school. For each tell me if you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all in preventing drop-outs.**

	2,011	**332**	**238**	**813**	**440**	**309**	**208**
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	78	79	85	81	77	72	62
	78	80	80	82	76	76	64
	76	82	81	79	75	67	57
	72	75	79	75	72	67	53
	62	64	69	64	62	53	47
	37	37	51	38	31	31	15

Table 6-6 *Steps That Teachers Think Would "Help a Lot" to Prevent Drop-Outs*

QUESTION: **Here are some things that might possibly help to prevent teenagers from *dropping out* of school. For each tell me if you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all in preventing drop-outs.**

			TYPE OF SCHOOL		
	TOTAL	TEACHERS WHO SAY DROP-OUTS ARE A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THEIR SCHOOL	JUNIOR HIGH	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
	1,002	101	450	247	334
	%	%	%	%	%
	70	78	74	68	63
	63	61	69	57	54
	61	60	68	56	48
	57	53	63	53	48
	59	53	68	47	46
	20	15	24	14	15

CHAPTER 7: TEACHERS' JOB SATISFACTION CONNECTED TO RELATIONS BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL

Previous surveys in this series have explored many of the causes of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction among the nation's teaching force. It is clear from this year's new data that we must add relations between home and school to the short list of major driving factors.

Job Satisfaction

Teachers who report excellent parent-teacher relations take much greater satisfaction in their jobs (Table 7-1). Moreover, satisfaction with the frequency of contact between home and school is strongly related to a teacher's overall job satisfaction.

Conversely, teachers who see many or most parents as uninterested in their child's education are much less satisfied with their job as a teacher. And teachers who have been reluctant to approach parents are also much less satisfied.

Likelihood of Leaving the Profession

A similar pattern holds for consideration of leaving the teaching profession (Table 7-2). Teachers who enjoy excellent relations with parents are much less likely to have considered leaving teaching, and much less likely to think they will leave in the next five years. Satisfaction over the frequency of contact with parents goes hand in hand with a desire to stay in the teaching profession. Conversely, teachers who think that many or most parents are uninterested in their child's education are much more likely to contemplate leaving.

OBSERVATION: The evidence is compelling to connect relations between home and school with the morale of the nation's teaching force. The quality of home-school links strongly affects job satisfaction, and job satisfaction strongly impacts on the likelihood of staying in or leaving the teaching profession. Those who are concerned about the recruitment, retention, and morale of America's classroom teachers must be concerned with the current state of home-school links in this country, with the barriers that need to be overcome, and with the steps that must be taken to make parents and teachers more effective partners in the education of our children.

Table 7-1 *Job Satisfaction of Teachers Connected to Relations With Parents*

QUESTION: **All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job as a teacher in the public schools — very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?**

	BASE	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED
		%	%	%	%
Total Teachers 1987	**1,002**	**40**	**45**	**12**	**2**
Relations Between Parents and Teachers					
Those who say excellent	178	67	28	5	—
Those who say good	527	40	46	12	1
Those who say fair or poor	294	24	53	18	6
Satisfaction With Frequency of Contact With Parents					
Those who say very	314	57	34	8	1
Those who say somewhat	456	37	49	12	2
Those who are dissatisfied	231	24	53	19	4
Proportion of Parents Perceived as Uninterested in Their Child's Education					
Those who say most	122	26	52	17	6
Those who say many	374	33	49	16	3
Those who say some or hardly any	504	49	41	9	1
Reluctance to Approach Parents					
Those who have been	534	35	48	15	2
Those who have not	467	47	42	10	2

Table 7-2 *Teachers Consider Leaving the Profession Connected to Relations With Parents*

QUESTION: **Have you ever seriously considered *leaving* teaching to go into some other occupation?**

QUESTION: **Within the next 5 years how likely is it that you will leave the teaching profession to go into some different occupation — very likely, fairly likely, not too likely, not at all likely?**

		[illegible]	[illegible]
		%	%
	1,002	**52**	**22**
	178	36	13
	527	54	23
	294	60	28
	314	41	16
	456	53	24
	231	68	30
	122	67	34
	374	58	27
	504	45	17
	403	32	10
	454	60	23
	144	85	53

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

PART I: TEACHERS' SECTION

Nature of the Teachers' Sample

In 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher was conducted by Louis Harris and Associates for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company during May and June, 1987. A total of 1,002 telephone interviews were conducted with current public school teachers in kindergarten through grade 12 throughout all states of the U.S. and the District of Columbia.

Sample Selection of Teachers

Louis Harris and Associates drew a random sample of current teachers from a list of 1.2 million teachers compiled by Market Data Retrieval of Westport, Connecticut. Sample sizes for completed interviews were set for each state, based on the proportion of elementary and secondary public school classroom teachers in each state. The state sample sizes were set in line with statistics published by the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics.

Interviewing Procedures for Teachers

Each selected teacher was contacted at his or her school either by letter or telephone or by both, and requested to participate in the survey. The message included a toll-free number to allow a return call.

Before being asked to complete the actual interview, each teacher was screened to ensure that he or she currently teaches in an elementary or secondary level public school and teaches at least part-time in the classroom. Once the respondent passed the screen, an appointment was made to telephone at a convenient time and place to complete the interview.

Questionnaire Development

First drafts of the questionnaire were pretested among a sample of 20 teachers and an equal number of parents. The lessons learned during this testing process provided important refinements to the survey questionnaire.

Many individuals contributed their comments to the survey questionnaire, and Louis Harris and Associates is extremely grateful for those contributions. However, final responsibility for the questionnaire rests with Louis Harris and Associates.

Processing of the Data

All completed questionnaires were edited, coded, keypunched, and verified. The data were tabulated, checked for internal consistency, and processed by computer. The output of this process is a series of computer tables for each of the two surveys, showing the results for each survey question, both by the total number of respondents interviewed and by important subgroups.

Sample Disposition and Completion Rates for Teachers

The sample disposition for this survey is shown in Table A-1. A total of 4,220 contacts at school were made to yield 1,002 completed interviews with teachers.

Of all the teachers who were contacted at their schools or with whom a message was left, 31% were willing to talk to a Louis Harris and Associates interviewer. Although there are a number of different methods by which response rates can be calculated, we arrived at this figure by comparing the number of teachers that we were able to reach with the complete list of current teachers at their school. We call this the "contact success rate."

The "contact success rate" this year is lower than the typical 50% level experienced in past years. This registers the effect of a controlled methodological test conducted this year in which some of the teachers were initially contacted by letter, and some by the traditional telephone message left at their school, and some by both letter and telephone message. In the end the letter-only approach yielded relatively few phone calls back from teachers, confirming the efficacy of the telephone message left-at-school approach used exclusively in all previous surveys in this series. We feel that the two methods are equally *valid*, but they do have quite different *rates* of return, which affect the "contact success rate" reported in this year's survey.

Of the teachers who were contacted by Louis Harris and Associates and who passed the screen, 84% completed an interview. We calculate this "interview completion rate" by dividing the number of completed interviews by the sum of: (1) the number of completed interviews, (2) the number of interview refusals, (3) the number of interviews terminated within the course of the interview, (4) the number of respondents who were left to call back at the time the survey was completed, and (5) the number who were unavailable for the duration of the field period. This "interview completion rate" is just as high as or higher than it has been in previous years.

With reference to Table A-1, the "contact success rate" and the "interview completion rate" have been calculated according to the following formulas:

$$\text{Contact Success Rate at School} = \frac{A+E+F+H+I+J+K+L}{A+E+F+G+H+I+J+K+L} = \frac{1264}{4077} = 31\%$$

$$\text{Interview Completion Rate} = \frac{A}{A+E+H+J+K} = \frac{1022}{1194} = 84\%$$

The disposition of all contacts is provided in Table A-1 so that interested individuals may make their own calculations of response rate, according to this or other formulas.

Weighting of the Teachers' Sample

The achieved sample of teachers was weighted to the latest, best available parameters for grade level, sex, and geographic region. This adjusts these key variables, where necessary, to their actual proportions in the population. Only mild weighting is necessary to correct for variations in response rates.

Table A-1
DISPOSITION OF THE TEACHER SAMPLE

		Teachers
A.	Completed interviews	1,002
B.	Nonworking number, wrong number, no new number	50
C.	No longer there, retired, deceased, on leave	22
D.	No answer or busy (after three callbacks)	71
E.	Refused interview	38
F.	Noneligible respondent (screened out)	4
G.	Never returned call after message left at school	2,813
H.	To call back (study completed before callback was needed)	134
I.	Language barrier	0
J.	Terminated within interview	1
K.	Not available during duration of field period	19
L.	Returned call but not needed by close of field period	66
	Total Number of Contacts	4,220

PART II: PARENTS' SECTION

Nature of the Parents' Sample

The 1987 survey data on parents in this report are based on interviews with 2,011 randomly selected parents across the country, conducted by telephone between May and June, 1987. The overall completion rate for this survey was 75% of eligible households reached. A full disposition of every telephone number called is shown in Table A-2. Approximately 9,000 households needed to be screened in order to locate and interview 2,011 parents of public school children.

Introduction to Surveys of the Public

Louis Harris and Associates' telephone surveys of the public are based on a national sample of the civilian population (18 years of age and older) of the United States. Those living in Alaska and Hawaii are not represented, nor are those in prisons, hospitals, or religious and educational institutions, unless such individuals have their own outside phone line. Samples are based on the Census Bureau's adult population figures for each state in the country. These figures are updated by intercensal estimates produced annually by the Census Bureau, and sample locations are selected biennially to reflect changes in the country's demographic and geographic profile.

National samples are stratified on two dimensions — geographic region and metropolitan versus nonmetropolitan residence. Stratification ensures that the sample will reflect, within 1%, those living in different regions of the country and those living in SMSA's and non-SMSA's. Within each stratum, the selection of the primary sampling unit (PSU) is achieved through multistage, unclustered sampling. First states, then counties, and then minor civil divisions are selected, with probability of selection proportionate to Census Bureau estimates of their respective populations.

Random Digit Dialing

Louis Harris and Associates employs a random-digit-dialing procedure to select households within primary sampling units. Random-digit-dialing is a significant improvement over previously used techniques, extending the potential coverage rate to almost 95% of the U.S. population.

Unless some method of random-digit-dialing is used, telephone samples must be drawn directly from published lists. However, since the population of unlisted phone number subscribers is large and demographically dissimilar to subscribers with listed phone numbers, reliance on telephone directories alone yields seriously biased samples. For this reason, using published phone listings as the universe is inadequate for telephone surveys and inferior to using random-digit-dialing.

The use of a random-digit-dialing method offers other important advantages:

- The sample is highly representative.
- Unlisted telephone numbers have the same probability of inclusion in the sample as listed numbers. This is particularly important in reaching both high income and minority populations.
- Respondents are geographically dispersed, rather than clustered.

Sample Development for Screening the Public

Virtually all of the hundreds of national telephone surveys of the public conducted by the Harris organization each year are based on a modified, stratified, random-digit-dialing method. In addition, Harris telephone surveys use a stratified area-probability approach rather than a single stage sample.

There are three important advantages to using an area-probability approach:

- It allows greater stratification of the population (Harris samples have twelve strata).
- It allows comparisons with Census Bureau data and other published demographic information that have a geographic base.
- It is compatible with sampling for in-person interviewing, thus providing greater versatility in study design.

The sample is developed in the following multistage process. First, a listing is constructed of the latest estimates of the adult population of every state within each region in rank order, then a running cumulative total of gross sums is produced. Next, a skip factor is calculated as t/n, where t is the adult population of the stratum and n is the number of sample points needed. Then a random number, ψ, smaller than the skip factor, is selected. Beginning with the random number, ψ, the sample points are then assigned according to where the numbers ψ, $(\psi + t/n)$, $(\psi + 2\,t/n)$, $(\psi + 3\,t/n) \ldots (\psi + (n-1\,t/n)$ fall on the running cumulative total of the adult population within that stratum. This same procedure is applied to each state within each region to form PSU's.

At the next stage of selection, one telephone number for each PSU is randomly selected from the updated Harris library of telephone directories. The selected numbers are then altered by dropping the last two digits (or occasionally just the last digit in rural areas) and replacing them with randomly selected two-digit numbers. As many randomly selected two-digit numbers as needed are successively appended until a working residential number is reached or until a screen is completed in each PSU. Technically, this method of sampling produces an epsem sample of all published banks of telephone number, i.e. a sample with an equal probability of selection method.

Stratification of Telephone Samples of the Public

The core telephone exchanges are stratified by two variables — geographic region and place of residence. The United States is divided into four regions, as follows:

1. *East:* Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, and West Virginia.
2. *South:* Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma.

3. *Midwest:* Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota.

4. *West:* Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, California, Oregon, and Washington.

We also use three categories for place of residence:

1. *Central City:* Every place defined by the Census Bureau as a central city of a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

2. *Rest of Metropolitan Area:* Every place that is not a central city but is within SMSA boundaries.

3. *Outside Metropolitan Area:* Every place that is not included in any of the other two categories.

We then define each place of residence category within each region as a stratum.

Control of the Sample

In order to maintain reliability and integrity in the sample, the telephone field staff follows these procedures when a respondent contact is attempted:

— A nonanswering telephone is dialed two more times over a three-day period. At the end of this time, if no contact is made, a new telephone number is generated for that PSU.

— If a business telephone is reached or if contact is made with a household in which a potential respondent presents a language barrier, a new telephone number is generated for that PSU.

— Once a residential contact is established, the interviewer uses a script to screen the household for eligibility.

Eligibility Screening for Parents

Potential respondents were asked how many children there were in the family under age 21 who have attended public school. If the answer was zero, the household was screened out. If there were two or more, the child who had celebrated the most recent birthday was designated as the one whom the questions would be about. Then the interviewer administered the questionnaire to the parent or legal guardian who knew about that child's education and school.

Callback Strategy

In order to attain the highest possible response rates within reasonable cost constraints, callbacks are made according to the following guidelines:

No Answer/Not-at-Homes: An initial call and then two callbacks to reach an adult member of the household. Callbacks are made on different days and at different times of the day. After the third call, the houseohld is replaced by another number in that PSU.

Refusals: One callback to try to convert any designated respondent who has refused or terminated an interview. If after the conversion attempt the designated respondent still declines the interview, another household is selected in that PSU.

Unavailable Respondents: An initial call and two callbacks to reach the designated member of the household. If after the third call the respondent is still not available for the interview, another household is selected in that PSU.

Busy Signals: An initial call, a followup fifteen minutes later, and two callbacks to reach a member of the household. Callbacks are made on different days and at different times of the day. If the telephone is still busy after the fourth call, a new number is selected in that PSU and the household is replaced.

Weighting of the Parents' Sample

The national cross-section of parents is weighted to the Census Bureau's latest population parameters for race, parent's education, and single-parent vs. two-parent status. This adjusts these key variables, where necessary, to their actual proportions in the population. Only slight weighting is necessary in Harris samples to correct for sub-group variations in telephone penetration and nonresponse rates.

All surveys tend to underrepresent to some extent the most disadvantaged stratum of society due to the inherent difficulty of reaching them. Weighting of data by such factors as race and education serves to correct any such underrepresentation and to assure that final results are fully projectable.

Table A-2
DISPOSITION OF ALL TELEPHONE NUMBERS CALLED FOR THE 1987 SURVEY OF PARENTS

Completed Interviews	**2,011**
Screen Outs	
No child under 21 who attended public school	6,989
Reached but Not Completed	
Respondent refused even to screen	1,528
Respondent terminated interview once begun	46
Callbacks Incomplete	
Callback needed to screen or interview, but respondent could not complete it by the end of field period	1,363
No Reachable Respondent	
Never any answer	3,910
Always busy	678
Phone number not in service	6,578
Phone number is a business	1,177
Unavailable due to language: no English-speaker in household	312
Everyone reported to be unavailable due to health	77
Everyone reported to be unavailable during duration of the field period	82
Miscellaneous	
Duplicate numbers, etc.	84
TOTAL OF TELEPHONE NUMBERS CALLED	24,835

STANDARD FORMULA FOR CALCULATION OF COMPLETION RATE:

$$\frac{\text{Screen Outs + Completions}}{\text{Screen Outs + Completions + Refusals + Terminations + Callbacks}} \qquad \frac{9,000}{11,937} = 75\%$$

Completion rate = 75% of eligible households reached.

Noncompletion rate = 25% of eligible households reached.

Table A-2, containing the disposition of all telephone numbers called, allows the interested reader to calculate response rates according to the above formula or other available formulas.

Reliability of Survey Percentages

It is important to bear in mind that the results from any sample survey are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of this variation is measurable and is affected both by the number of interviews involved and by the level of the percentages expressed in the results.

Table A-3 shows the possible sample variation that applies to percentage results for this survey. The chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than the indicated number of percentage points from the result that would have been obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample.

For example, if the response for a sample size of 1,500 is 30%, then in 95 cases out of 100 the response in the total population would be between 28% and 32%. Note that survey results based on subgroups of small size can be subject to large sampling error.

Sampling tolerances are also involved in the comparison of results from different surveys or from different parts of a sample (subgroup analysis). Table A-4 shows the percentage difference that must be obtained before a difference can be considered statistically significant. These figures, too, represent the 95% confidence level.

For example, suppose one group of 1,000 has a response of 34% "yes" to a question, and an independent group of 500 has a response of 28% "yes" to the same question, for an observed difference of 6 percentage points. According to the table, this difference is subject to a potential sampling error of 5 percentage points. Since the observed difference is greater than the sampling error, the observed difference is significant.

These errors account for sampling error only. Survey research is also susceptible to other errors, such as in data handling and in interviewer recording. The procedures followed by Louis Harris and Associates, however, keep errors of these kinds to a minimum.

Table A-3

Approximate Sampling Tolerances (at 95% Confidence) to Use in Evaluating Percentage Results Appearing in This Report

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ASKED QUESTION ON WHICH SURVEY RESULT IS BASED	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 10% OR 90%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 20% OR 80%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 30% OR 70%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 40% OR 60%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 50%
2,000	1	2	2	2	2
1,500	2	2	2	3	3
1,000	2	2	3	3	3
900	2	3	3	3	3
800	2	3	3	3	3
700	2	3	3	4	4
600	2	3	4	4	4
500	3	4	4	4	4
400	3	4	4	5	5
300	3	5	5	6	6
200	4	6	6	7	7
100	6	8	9	10	10
50	8	11	13	14	14

Table A-4

Approximate Sampling Tolerances (at 95% Confidence) to Use in Evaluating Differences Between Two Percentage Results Appearing in This Report

APPROXIMATE SAMPLE SIZE OF TWO GROUPS ASKED QUESTION ON WHICH SURVEY RESULT IS BASED	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 10% OR 90%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 20% OR 80%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 30% OR 70%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 40% OR 60%	SURVEY PERCENTAGE RESULT AT 50%
2,000 vs. 1,000	2	3	4	4	4
800	3	3	4	4	4
500	3	4	4	5	5
300	4	5	6	6	6
200	4	6	7	7	7
100	6	8	9	10	10
50	9	11	13	14	14
1,000 vs. 1,000	3	4	4	4	4
800	3	4	4	5	5
500	3	4	5	5	5
300	4	5	6	6	6
200	5	6	7	7	8
100	6	8	9	10	10
50	9	11	13	14	14
800 vs. 800	3	4	4	5	5
500	3	4	5	5	6
300	4	5	6	7	7
200	5	6	7	8	8
100	6	8	10	10	10
50	9	11	13	14	14
500 vs. 500	4	4	6	6	6
300	4	6	7	7	7
200	6	7	8	8	8
100	7	9	10	11	11
50	9	12	13	14	15
300 vs. 300	5	6	7	8	8
200	5	7	8	9	9
100	7	9	10	11	11
50	9	12	14	15	15
200 vs. 200	6	8	9	10	10
100	7	10	11	12	12
50	9	12	14	15	15
100 vs. 100	8	11	13	14	14
50	10	14	16	17	17
50 vs. 50	12	16	18	19	20

THE QUESTIONNAIRES

LOUIS HARRIS AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
630 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10111

TEACHERS
FINAL
N = 1,002

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
Questionnaire No. _____
5 6 7 8

Study No. 874006 (Teachers)

May 12, 1987 **Sample Point No.:** _____
10 - 11 - 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16 - 17

Interviewer: _____ **I.D. No.:** _____ **Date:** _____

Area Code: _____ **Telephone No.:** _____ **(18-27)**

– –

Hello, I'm _____from Louis Harris and Associates, the national opinion polling and research firm in New York. We are conducting a national survey among teachers to learn some of their attitudes about the American educational system, and we would like to ask you a few questions.

– –

From Observation:

Respondent sex:

Male	(28(30-1
Female	70-2
	100%

Region

East	21
Midwest	29
South	32
West	18
	100%

WEIGHTED BY REGION, SEX, AND GRADE LEVEL

(1984) (1986)

1. All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job as a teacher in the public schools — very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

Very satisfied	(29(	40	-1
Somewhat satisfied		45	-2
Somewhat dissatisfied		12	-3
Very dissatisfied		2	-4
Not sure		*	-5

(1985) (1986)

2. Do you teach in an elementary school, a junior high school, or a high school?

Elementary school (Grades K-6)	(30(	56	-1	55
Junior high school (Grades 7-9)		20	-2 }	45
High school (Grades 9-12 or 10-12)		26	-3 }	
Not sure		*	-4	
		102%		100%

3. **I am going to read several aspects on which public schools can be judged. For each, please tell me whether you would rate your school excellent, good, fair, or poor on that aspect. (READ EACH ITEM)**

ROTATE – START AT "X"	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure or Not Applicable
( ) a. The school's physical facilities	(31(27 -1	39 -2	23 -3	12 -4	* -5
( ) b. The qualifications and competence of teachers in your school	(32(51 -1	43 -2	6 -3	* -4	* -5
( ) c. The effectiveness of the school board in dealing with school matters	(33(10 -1	40 -2	35 -3	14 -4	1 -5
( ) d. The amount of homework assigned by the school	(34(12 -1	55 -2	24 -3	3 -4	6 -5
( ) e. The amount of support for the school shown by the parents	(35(22 -1	36 -2	31 -3	11 -4	* -5
( ) f. The quality of the homework assigned by the school	(36(12 -1	60 -2	19 -3	2 -4	7 -5
( ) g. The degree to which most teachers seem to care about their students	(37(49 -1	44 -2	6 -3	* -4	* -5
( ) h. The degree to which most students seem motivated to learn	(38(9 -1	43 -2	39 -3	9 -4	1 -5
( ) i. The availability and responsiveness of *parents* when you need to contact them	(39(16 -1	38 -2	34 -3	12 -4	1 -5
( ) j. The success of the school in preparing students for jobs after high school	(40(10 -1	45 -2	21 -3	5 -4	20 -5
( ) k. The success of the school in preparing students for education beyond high school	(41(23 -1	49 -2	14 -3	3 -4	11 -5
( ) l. The relations between parents and teachers in your school	(42(18 -1	52 -2	24 -3	5 -4	* -5
( ) m. The extent to which the school enables students to achieve some success in their work each day	(43(31 -1	59 -2	10 -3	* -4	* -5
DO NOT ROTATE					
( ) n. The overall quality of the education that students receive at your school	(44(30 -1	61 -2	8 -3	1 -4	* -5

4. **Is the education that children receive in school better today or worse today than the education that was being given? (READ EACH ITEM)**

	Better Today	Worse Today	Same, No Difference (vol.)	Not Sure
( ) a. Three years ago	(45(71 -1	11 -2	16 -3	2 -4
( ) b. Ten years ago	(46(71 -1	21 -2	5 -3	4 -4
( ) c. When you yourself were in school	(47(65 -1	28 -2	4 -3	3 -4

5. **Have you ever felt uneasy or reluctant about approaching a parent to talk with them about their child?**

Yes	(48(55	-1
No	45	-2
Not sure	*	-3

6. **If you needed to meet with a parent about their child, what time of day would be most convenient for you — before the school day, during the school day, after school, or in the evening? (MULTIPLE RECORD)**

Before the school day	(49(26	-1
During the school day	31	-2
After school	58	-3
In the evening	9	-4
Not sure	1	-5

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7. **In trying to increase the involvement of parents with the school, do you think that the *teacher* can take the first step, or can only *parents* take the first step?**

Teacher can	(50(73	-1
Only parents can	6	-2
Both (vol.)	20	-3
Not sure	1	-4

8. **Tell me whether you agree or disagree with each statement about *your* school.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"		Agree		Disagree		Not Sure	
( ) a.	Our school does a good job of encouraging parental involvement in *educational* areas	(51(80	-1	20	-2	*	-3
( ) b.	Our school does a good job of encouraging parental involvement in sports, arts, and other non-subject areas	(52(77	-1	20	-2	3	-3
( ) c.	Our school does not give parents the opportunity for any meaningful roles	(53(8	-1	91	-2	*	-3
( ) d.	Our school only contacts parents when there is a problem with their child	(54(23	-1	77	-2	*	-3

9. **Here are some possible ways that parents might be involved with the school. For each tell me how valuable you think it would be — very valuable, somewhat valuable, not too valuable, or not valuable at all.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"		Very Valuable		Somewhat Valuable		Not Too Valuable		Not Valuable at All		Not Sure	
( ) a.	Involving parents as promoters and fund raisers for your school	(55(63	-1	31	-2	4	-3	1	-4	*	-5
( ) b.	Involving parents on a management team to determine school policies	(56(26	-1	53	-2	15	-3	6	-4	—	-5
( ) c.	Providing parents with information and materials to support or reinforce what is being taught at school	(57(69	-1	26	-2	4	-3	1	-4	*	-5
( ) d.	Placing parents on committees that decide the curriculum of the school	(58(18	-1	49	-2	23	-3	9	-4	*	-5
( ) e.	Having parents do volunteer work to help out at the school	(59(68	-1	28	-2	3	-3	1	-4	*	-5

10. **How satisfied are you with the *frequency* of contact you have with your students' parents -- very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?**

Very satisfied	(67(33	-1
Somewhat satisfied	45	-2
Somewhat dissatisfied	18	-3
Very dissatisfied	4	-4
Not sure	1	-5

11. **When it comes to (READ EACH ITEM) do you think that parents should be actively consulted, or just be kept informed, or not be involved at all?**

ROTATE -- START AT "X"	Actively Consulted	Just Kept Informed	Not Be Involved At All	Not Sure
( ) a. Changes in what subjects are taught	(68(44 -1	54 -2	2 -3	* -4
( ) b. Changes in extra-curricular activities	(69(53 -1	44 -2	1 -3	2 -4
( ) c. Changes in class size policy	(70(45 -1	50 -2	5 -3	1 -4
( ) d. Changes in homework policy	(71(43 -1	54 -2	2 -3	1 -4
( ) e. Changes in the discipline policy	(72(59 -1	40 -2	1 -3	* -4
( ) f. Changes in the grading standards	(73(40 -1	57 -2	3 -3	— -4

INTERVIEWER: BE SURE TO REPEAT THE *STEM* OF THE QUESTION SEVERAL TIMES.

12. **In general, when parents are involved with education, do you think it is important for parents to be involved *at the school* itself, or should parents mainly be involved at *home?***

At school	(74(41	-1
Mainly at home	24	-2
Both (vol.)	34	-3
Neither (vol.)	*	-4
Not sure	1	-5

13. **Let me ask about some criticisms that are sometimes made of parents. How many *parents* do you think (READ EACH ITEM) — most, many, some, or hardly any?**

ROTATE — START AT "X"		Most Parents	Many Parents	Some Parents	Hardly Any Parents	Not Sure
( ) a. Take too little interest in their children's education	2*	(10(12 -1	36 -2	44 -3	8 -4	* -5
( ) b. Leave their children alone too much on their own after school		(11(16 -1	46 -2	33 -3	5 -4	1 -5
( ) c. Fail to motivate their children so that they want to learn in school		(12(14 -1	39 -2	43 -3	5 -4	* -5
( ) d. Fail to discipline their children		(13(13 -1	38 -2	44 -3	4 -4	1 -5
( ) e. Set too high or too strict a standard for their children to meet		(14(2 -1	10 -2	54 -3	35 -4	* -5
( ) f. Fail to show respect for teachers		(15(6 -1	17 -2	55 -3	23 -4	* -5
( ) g. Neglect to see that their children's homework gets done		(16(14 -1	36 -2	43 -3	6 -4	1 -5

14. **Do you think that (READ EACH ITEM) are a major cause, a minor cause, or not a cause of students' having difficulty in school.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Major Cause	Minor Cause	Not A Cause	Not Sure
( ) a. Single parent families	(17(42 -1	50 -2	7 -3	1 -4
( ) b. Families where both parents work full-time	(18(25 -1	60 -2	14 -3	1 -4
( ) c. Children who are left on their own after school	(19(51 -1	44 -2	5 -3	1 -4
( ) d. Automatic promotion	(20(44 -1	41 -2	12 -3	4 -4
( ) e. Boring curriculum	(21(34 -1	51 -2	14 -3	2 -4
( ) f. Teachers not adapting to individual student needs	(22(43 -1	49 -2	8 -3	1 -4
( ) g. Poverty in the student's home	(23(47 -1	45 -2	8 -3	1 -4

15. **Here are some things that might possibly improve education. For each tell me whether you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all to improve education.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Help A Lot	Help Some	Not Help Much	Not Help At All	Not Sure
( ) a. Having parents spend much more time with their children in support of school and teachers	(24(84 -1	15 -2	1 -3	* -4	* -5
( ) b. Getting teachers and parents to meet together and talk about school policies	(25(52 -1	41 -2	6 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) c. Having the school notify the parents immediately about any problem involving their child	(26(77 -1	21 -2	2 -3	— -4	* -5
( ) d. Having parents limit television until all homework is finished	(27(80 -1	18 -2	2 -3	* -4	— -5
( ) e. Establishing a homework hotline which students can call for advice on how to deal with a homework assignment	(28(42 -1	45 -2	10 -3	2 -4	* -5
( ) f. Distributing a newsletter to keep parents informed about what's happening in school	(29(51 -1	39 -2	8 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) g. Having the school give more guidance to teachers about how to involve parents better in the future	(30(41 -1	48 -2	10 -3	4 -4	-5

16. **Here are some additional ways to utilize the public schools that might possibly benefit the community. For each tell me if you approve strongly, approve somewhat, disapprove somewhat, or disapprove strongly.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Approve Strongly	Approve Somewhat	Disapprove Somewhat	Disapprove Strongly	Not Sure
( ) a. Using some of the school's facilities to organize daycare centers for pre-school children	(31(34 -1	39 -2	16 -3	9 -4	1 -5
( ) b. Using school facilities to organize extra-curricular activities for students after school	(32(66 -1	30 -2	3 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) c. Using school facilities to offer night classes for adults in many different subjects	(33(78 -1	20 -2	2 -3	* -4	* -5
( ) d. Using school facilities to organize special activities for the elderly	(34(58 -1	38 -2	3 -3	1 -4	* -5

17. **Here are some more things that might possibly improve education. For each tell me whether you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all to improve education.**

ROTATE – START AT "X"	Help A Lot	Help Some	Not Help Much	Not Help At All	Not Sure
( ) a. Beginning the educational process earlier by enrolling students in preschool education programs	(35(31 -1	42 -2	15 -3	11 -4	* -5
( ) b. Providing optional day-care programs with an educational component after the regular school hours	(36(24 -1	53 -2	15 -3	7 -4	1 -5
( ) c. Developing educational programs designed for students who are frequently absent from school	(37(44 -1	38 -2	14 -3	4 -4	1 -5
( ) d. Developing school programs to involve parents with students who have special needs	(38(67 -1	30 -2	2 -3	* -4	* -5
( ) e. Developing school programs to involve members of the community with students who have special needs	(39(53 -1	42 -2	4 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) f. Developing different approaches to education outside the traditional school	(40(41 -1	49 -2	7 -3	1 -4	1 -5
( ) g. Providing counseling and support services to children with emotional, mental, social, or family problems	(41(81 -1	17 -2	2 -3	* -4	* -5

INTERVIEWER: BE SURE TO REPEAT THE *STEM* OF THE QUESTION SEVERAL TIMES.

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18. **Suppose that parents could *choose* between *several* different public schools for their child. Do you think that most parents would probably be satisfied with their *present* school, or would most parents think seriously about choosing a *different* school?**

Satisfied with present school	(42(81	-1
Seriously think about other	15	-2
Depends (vol.)	2	-3
Not sure	2	-4

19. **Here are some things that might happen if parents *were* given a choice between several different public schools for their child. For each tell me if you think it probably would happen, or probably would not happen.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Probably Would Happen	Probably Would Not Happen	Depends (vol.)	Not Sure
( ) a. Competition between schools to attract students would force schools to improve	(43(69 -1	28 -2	1 -3	1 -4
( ) b. Richer children would end up at better schools and poorer children would end up at others	(44(75 -1	22 -2	1 -3	1 -4
( ) c. Having a choice between schools would raise the involvement of parents in their child's education	(45(63 -1	36 -2	1 -3	1 -4
( ) d. Having a choice between schools would mean that a school would lose its identity with the local community	(46(52 -1	46 -2	1 -3	1 -4
( ) e. Having a choice of schools would mean that a child could go to the school best suited for his or her individual needs	(47(66 -1	32 -2	1 -3	1 -4
( ) f. Some schools would be unpopular and children going there would lose out	(48(75 -1	23 -2	1 -3	1 -4

20. **Here are some things that might possibly help to prevent teenagers from *dropping out* of school. For each tell me if you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all in preventing drop-outs.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Help A Lot	Help Some	Not Help Much	Not Help At All	Not Sure
( ) a. Having the school inform parents immediately about any absence or truancy	(49)(63 -1	29 -2	6 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) b. Having the school sponsor more extra-curricular activities after school	(50)(20 -1	47 -2	23 -3	9 -4	* -5
( ) c. Increasing the opportunities available to those who finish school — such as jobs and college scholarships	(51)(61 -1	33 -2	5 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) d. Providing more vocational education and job training	(52)(70 -1	26 -2	3 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) e. Having schools provide special help to students who are failing	(53)(59 -1	35 -2	5 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) f. Creating programs in which students can go to school part of the day and work at a job part of the day	(54)(57 -1	36 -2	5 -3	2 -4	* -5

INTERVIEWER: BE SURE TO REPEAT THE *STEM* OF THE QUESTION SEVERAL TIMES.

21. **At your school is the problem of students dropping out a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem?**

A major problem	(55)(9-1
A minor problem	40 -2
Not a problem	50 -3
Not sure	1 -4

99

22. **Have you ever seriously considered *leaving* teaching to go into some other occupation?**

Yes, considered	(56(52	-1
No, not considered	47	-2
Not sure	*	-3

23. **Within the next five years how likely is it that you will leave the teaching profession to go into some different occupation — very likely, fairly likely, not too likely, or not at all likely?**

Very likely	(57(11	-1
Fairly likely	12	-2
Not too likely	31	-3
Not at all likely	46	-4
Not sure	1	-5

F1. **Is the area where your school is located considered inner city, urban, suburban, small town, or rural?**

Inner city	(58(12	-1
Urban	10	-2
Suburban	24	-3
Small town	30	-4
Rural	24	-5
Not sure	*	-6

F2. **For purposes of receiving state school aid, is your school district considered to be of above average wealth, average wealth, or below average wealth?**

Above average wealth	(59(21	-1
Average wealth	43	-2
Below average wealth	35	-3
Not sure	1	-4

F3. **Regardless of the number of schools you've taught in, for about how many *years*, in total have you worked as a teacher?**

Mean = 15½ years
Median = 15 years

|_|_| years
(60-61)

Not sure.... (62(-1

F4. **What was the *last* grade or level of school that you yourself completed?**

READ LIST IF NECESSARY

Less than high school (grades 1-11)	(63(—	-1
High school graduate (grade 12)	*	-2
Some college	*	-3
Two-year college graduate	*	-4
Four-year college graduate	14	-5
Some graduate credits	32	-6
Master's completed	26	-7
Credits beyond master's	26	-8
Ph.D. completed	1	-9
Not sure	—	-0

ASK EVERYONE

F5. **How old are you?**

READ LIST

18 to 20	(64(	—	-1
21 to 24		2	-2
25 to 29		7	-3
30 to 34		14	-4
35 to 39		22	-5
40 to 44		21	-6
45 to 49		13	-7
50 to 64		20	-8
65 or over		1	-9

F6. **Do you live in the same school district in which you teach, or do you live in some other school district?**

Live in same district	(65(	56	-1
Live in other district		44	-2
Not sure		*	-3

F7. **Do you have any children who are under age 21?**

Yes	(66(	59	-1
No		41	-2
Not sure		*	-3

F8. **Have you ever served in a position, or have you ever been asked to serve in a position, of supervising other teachers?**

Yes, served or was asked to serve	(67(	44	-1
No		55	-2
Not sure		*	-3

F9. **Have you ever received any award, citation, or special recognition for your teaching?**

Yes, received	(68(	44	-1
No, did not		56	-2
Not sure		*	-3

F10. **Do you consider yourself white, black, Asian, or what?**

White	(69(	90	-1
Black		7	-2
Asian		1	-3
Other		1	-4
Not sure		—	-5
Refused		1	-6

That completes the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

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Time Ended: _____ (____ A.M.
(____ P.M.

70-80Z

LOUIS HARRIS AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
630 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10111

PARENTS
FINAL
N = 2,011

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY
Questionnaire No. _____
5 - 6 - 7 - 8

Study No. 874006 (Parents)

May 12, 1987 **Sample Point No.:** _____
10 - 11 - 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16 - 17

Interviewer: _____ **I.D. No.:** _____ **Date:** _____

Area Code: _____ **Telephone No.:** _____

Hello, I'm _____ from Louis Harris and Associates, the national opinion polling and research firm in New York. We are conducting a national survey among parents of public school children to learn some of their attitudes about the American educational system, and we would like to speak with someone in your household.

S1. **How many children are there in the family under age 21 who have attended public school?**

None	(28(0	-0	(SCREEN OUT. ASK QUESTIONS ON BACK)
One	41	-1	(ASK Q.S2)
More than one	59	-2	(SAY: THESE QUESTIONS WILL ALL BE ABOUT THE CHILD WHO HAS CELEBRATED THE MOST RECENT BIRTHDAY. WHAT IS THAT CHILD'S FIRST NAME?)

S2. **And that child is a boy, or girl?**

Boy	(29(54	-1	
Girl	46	-2	

S3. **Would you be the parent or legal guardian who knows about that child's education and school. (IF NO, ASK TO SPEAK WITH THAT PERSON)**

S4. **And is that child now in elementary school, junior high school, high school, or out of school?**

Elementary	(30(44	-1	(GO TO Q.1)
Junior high/middle	19	-2	
High school	25	-3	
Out of school	12	-4	(SAY: THESE QUESTIONS WILL REFER TO HIS/HER LAST YEARS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL)

WEIGHTED BY RACE, PARENT'S EDUCATION, AND SINGLE VS. TWO PARENTS

1. **I am going to read several aspects on which public schools can be judged. For each, please tell me whether you would rate your school excellent, good, fair, or poor on that aspect. (READ EACH ITEM)**

ROTATE – START AT "X"	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Not Sure or Not Applicable
( ) a. The school's physical facilities	(31(26 -1	46 -2	20 -3	7 -4	1 -5
( ) b. The qualifications and competence of teachers in your school	(32(26 -1	48 -2	20 -3	4 -4	2 -5
( ) c. The effectiveness of the school board in dealing with school matters	(33(15 -1	43 -2	27 -3	11 -4	4 -5
( ) d. The amount of homework assigned by the school	(34(16 -1	47 -2	24 -3	9 -4	4 -5
( ) e. The amount of support for the school shown by the parents	(35(26 -1	41 -2	23 -3	9 -4	1 -5
( ) f. The quality of the homework assigned by the school	(36(17 -1	49 -2	22 -3	7 -4	4 -5
( ) g. The degree to which most teachers seem to care about their students	(37(31 -1	39 -2	21 -3	9 -4	* -5
( ) h. The degree to which most students seem motivated to learn	(38(15 -1	44 -2	30 -3	9 -4	2 -5
( ) i. The availability and responsiveness of *teachers* when you need to contact them	(39(38 -1	38 -2	16 -3	8 -4	1 -5
( ) j. The success of the school in preparing students for jobs after high school	(40(12 -1	32 -2	19 -3	13 -4	25 -5
( ) k. The success of the school in preparing students for education beyond high school	(41(17 -1	40 -2	20 -3	8 -4	16 -5
( ) l. The relations between parents and teachers in your school	(42(25 -1	47 -2	21 -3	7 -4	1 -5
( ) m. The extent to which the school enables students to achieve some success in their work each day	(43(20 -1	50 -2	23 -3	5 -4	2 -5
DO NOT ROTATE					
( ) n. The overall quality of the education that your child receives	(44(27 -1	50 -2	18 -3	5 -4	1 -5

2. **Is the education that children receive in school better today or worse today than the education that was being given? (READ EACH ITEM)**

	Better Today	Worse Today	Same, No Difference (vol.)	Not Sure
( ) a. Three years ago	(45(58 -1	18 -2	15 -3	9 -4
( ) b. Ten years ago	(46(62 -1	26 -2	5 -3	7 -4
( ) c. When you yourself were in school	(47(62 -1	32 -2	3 -3	3 -4

3. **Have you ever felt awkward or reluctant about approaching a teacher to talk with them about your child?**

Yes	(48(19 -1
No	81 -2
Not sure	* -3

4. **If you needed to meet with a teacher about your child, what time of day would be most convenient for you — before the school day, during the school day, after school, or in the evening? (MULTIPLE RECORD)**

Before the school day	(49(17 -1
During the school day	24 -2
After school	43 -3
In the evening	32 -4
Not sure	2 -5

5. **In trying to increase the involvement of parents with the school, do you think that the *teacher* can take the first step, or can only *parents* take the first step?**

Teacher can	(50(45 -1
Only parents can	24 -2
Both (vol.)	30 -3
Not sure	2 -4

6. **Tell me whether you agree or disagree with each statement about *your* school.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
( ) a. Our school does a good job of encouraging parental involvement in *educational* areas	(51(73 -1	26 -2	1 -3
( ) b. Our school does a good job of encouraging parental involvement in sports, arts, and other non-subject areas	(52(77 -1	21 -2	2 -3
( ) c. Our school does not give parents the opportunity for any meaningful roles	(53(22 -1	76 -2	2 -3
( ) d. Our school only contacts parents when there is a problem with their child	(54(55 -1	43 -2	1 -3

7. **Here are some possible ways that parents might be involved with the school. For each tell me how valuable you think it would be — very valuable, somewhat valuable, not too valuable, or not valuable at all.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Very Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Not Too Valuable	Not Valuable at All	Not Sure
( ) a. Involving parents as promoters and fund raisers for your school	(55(53 -1	37 -2	6 -3	3 -4	* -5
( ) b. Involving parents on a management team to determine school policies	(56(51 -1	36 -2	9 -3	3 -4	1 -5
( ) c. Providing parents with information and materials to support or reinforce what is being taught at school	(57(74 -1	23 -2	3 -3	* -4	1 -5
( ) d. Placing parents on committees that decide the curriculum of the school	(58(47 -1	39 -2	9 -3	4 -4	1 -5
( ) e. Having parents do volunteer work to help out the school	(59(67 -1	29 -2	3 -3	1 -4	* -5

8. **How often do you (READ EACH ITEM) — never, once a year, 2 or 3 times per year, or more than 3 times per year?**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Never	Once a Year	2 or 3 Times a Year	More Than 3 Times a Year	Not Sure
( ) a. Attend a play, sports event, or concert at the school	(60(11 -1	10 -2	29 -3	50 -4	* -5
( ) b. Meet in person with a teacher or school official one-on-one	(61(5 -1	15 -2	38 -3	41 -4	1 -5
( ) c. Talk on the telephone with a teacher or school official	(62(18 -1	17 -2	30 -3	34 -4	1 -5
( ) d. Exchange written notes with a teacher or school official about some problem your child is having	(63(34 -1	16 -2	23 -3	27 -4	1 -5
( ) e. Attend meetings of a parents' group such as the PTA	(64(32 -1	14 -2	25 -3	30 -4	1 -5
( ) f. Go in to the school to hear about and discuss school issues and see the school environment	(65(13 -1	19 -2	32 -3	35 -4	* -5

INTERVIEWER: BE SURE TO REPEAT THE *STEM* OF THE QUESTION SEVERAL TIMES.

9. **Have you ever taken time off from your work to visit the school?**

Yes ..... (66(65 -1
No ..... 27 -2
Not sure ..... * -3
Don't work (vol.) ..... 8 -4

10. **How satisfied are you with the *frequency of contact* you have with your child's teachers and school -- very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?**

Very satisfied	(67(53	-1
Somewhat satisfied	32	-2
Somewhat dissatisfied	10	-3
Very dissatisfied	5	-4
Not sure	*	-5

11. **When it comes to (READ EACH ITEM) do you think that parents should be actively consulted, or just be kept informed, or not be involved at all?**

ROTATE -- START AT "X"	Activity Consulted	Just Kept Informed	Not Be Involved At All	Not Sure
( ) a. Changes in what subjects are taught	(68(51 -1	47 -2	2 -3	* -4
( ) b. Changes in extra-curricular activities	(69(46 -1	52 -2	2 -3	* -4
( ) c. Changes in class size policy	(70(43 -1	51 -2	5 -3	1 -4
( ) d. Changes in homework policy	(71(42 -1	54 -2	3 -3	1 -4
( ) e. Changes in discipline policy	(72(59 -1	39 -2	1 -3	1 -4
( ) f. Changes in grading standards	(73(45 -1	51 -2	3 -3	1 -4

INTERVIEWER: BE SURE TO REPEAT THE *STEM* OF THE QUESTION SEVERAL TIMES.

12. **In general, when parents are involved with education, do you think it is important for parents to be involved *at the school* itself, or should parents mainly be involved at *home?***

At school	(74(42	-1
Mainly at home	25	-2
Both (vol.)	32	-3
Neither (vol.)	*	-4
Not sure	1	-5

13a. **How often is your child *on his her own* between the end of school and 5:30 p.m. — never, one or two days a week, or almost every day?**

Never	(75(58	-1
One or two days a week	17	-2
Almost every day	24	-3
Not sure	1	-4

13b. **If his her school provided an *educational* program for him her from after school until 5:30 p.m., would he she never use it, use it one or two days a week, or use it almost every day?**

	Q.13b Education Program		Q.13c Non-education Program	
Would never use	(76(33	-1	(77(21	-1
Would use one or two days a week	38	-2	49	-2
Would use almost every day	24	-3	26	-3
Depends (vol.)	4	-4	4	-4
Not sure	1	-5	1	-5

13c. **And if his her school provided a *non-educational* program of recreation or extra-curricular activities after school until 5:30 p.m., would he she never use it, use it one or two days a week, or use it almost every day? (RECORD ABOVE)**

13d. **Suppose that the school budget could not afford to pay for these kind of after school programs. Would you be willing to pay for an *educational* program after school, or not?**

	Q.13d Education Program		Q.13e Non-education Program	
Yes, willing to pay	(78(59	-1	(79(52	-1
No	25	-2	34	-2
Cannot afford (vol.)	3	-3	2	-3
Depends (vol.)	11	-4	11	-4
Not sure	1	-5	1	-5

13e. **Would you be willing to pay for a *non-education* after school program of recreation or extra-curricular activities, or not? (RECORD ABOVE)**

80Z

14. **Let me ask about some criticisms that are sometimes made of parents. How many *parents* do you think (READ EACH ITEM) — most, many, some, or hardly any?**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Most Parents	Many Parents	Some Parents	Hardly Any Parents	Not Sure
( ) a. Take too little interest in their children's education 2*	(10(20 -1	32 -2	37 -3	9 -4	2 -5
( ) b. Leave their children alone too much on their own after school	(11(21 -1	38 -2	30 -3	7 -4	3 -5
( ) c. Fail to motivate their children so that they want to learn in school	(12(19 -1	33 -2	38 -3	8 -4	2 -5
( ) d. Fail to discipline their children	(13(23 -1	35 -2	34 -3	6 -4	2 -5
( ) e. Set too high or too strict a standard for their children to meet .	(14(12 -1	18 -2	48 -3	20 -4	2 -5
( ) f. Fail to show respect for teachers	(15(14 -1	20 -2	46 -3	17 -4	3 -5
( ) g. Neglect to see that their children's homework gets done	(16(19 -1	30 -2	39 -3	9 -4	2 -5

15. **Here are some things that might possibly improve education. For each tell me whether you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all to improve education.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Help A Lot	Help Some	Not Help Much	Not Help At All	Not Sure
( ) a. Having parents spend much more time with their children in support of school and teachers	(17(70 -1	28 -2	2 -3	* -4	1 -5
( ) b. Getting teachers and parents to meet and talk about school policies	(18(58 -1	36 -2	4 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) c. Having the school notify the parents immediately about any problem involving their child	(19(88 -1	11 -2	1 -3	* -4	* -5
( ) d. Having parents limit television until all homework is finished	(20(79 -1	17 -2	3 -3	1 -4	1 -5
( ) e. Establishing a homework hotline which students can call for advice on how to deal with a homework assignment	(21(64 -1	28 -2	5 -3	2 -4	1 -5
( ) f. Distributing a newsletter to keep parents informed about what's happening in school	(22(68 -1	28 -2	3 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) g. Having the school give more guidance to teachers about how to involve parents better in the future	(23(60 -1	36 -2	2 -3	1 -4	1 -5

16. **Here are some additional ways to utilize the public schools that might possibly benefit the community. For each tell me if you approve strongly, approve somewhat, disapprove somewhat, or disapprove strongly.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Approve Strongly	Approve Somewhat	Disapprove Somewhat	Disapprove Strongly	Not Sure
( ) a. Using some of the school's facilities to organize day-care centers for preschool children	(24(41 -1	36 -2	14 -3	8 -4	1 -5
( ) b. Using school facilities to organize extra-curricular activities for students after school	(25(59 -1	35 -2	4 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) c. Using school facilities to offer night classes for adults in many different subjects	(26(73 -1	24 -2	2 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) d. Using school facilities to organize special activities for the elderly	(27(61 -1	31 -2	5 -3	2 -4	* -5

17. **Here are some more things that might possibly improve education. For each tell me whether you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all to improve education?**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Help A Lot	Help Some	Not Help Much	Not Help At All	Not Sure
( ) a. Beginning the educational process earlier by enrolling students in preschool education programs	(28(49 -1	32 -2	11 -3	7 -4	1 -5
( ) b. Providing optional day-care programs with an educational component after the regular school hours	(29(39 -1	43 -2	11 -3	6 -4	1 -5
( ) c. Developing educational programs designed for students who are frequently absent from school	(30(54 -1	30 -2	9 -3	5 -4	1 -5
( ) d. Developing school programs to involve parents with students who have special needs	(31(73 -1	26 -2	1 -3	* -4	* -5
( ) e. Developing school programs to involve members of the community with students who have special needs	(32(62 -1	33 -2	4 -3	1 -4	1 -5
( ) f. Developing different approaches to education outside the traditional school	(33(40 -1	49 -2	6 -3	2 -4	2 -5
( ) g. Providing counseling and support services to children with emotional, mental, social, or family problems	(34(80 -1	18 -2	1 -3	1 -4	* -5

INTERVIEWER: BE SURE TO REPEAT THE *STEM* OF THE QUESTION SEVERAL TIMES.

18. **Suppose you could *choose* between *several* different public schools for your child. Would you probably be satisfied with your *present* school, or would you think seriously about choosing a *different* school?**

Satisfied with present school	(35(74-1
Seriously think about other	24 -2
Depends (vol.)	1 -3
Not sure	1 -4

19. **Here are some things that might happen if parents *were* given a choice between several different public schools for their child. For each tell me if you think it probably would happen, or probably would not happen.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Probably Would Happen	Probably Would Not Happen	Depends (vol.)	Not Sure
( ) a. Competition between schools to attract students would force schools to improve	(36(69 -1	28 -2	1 -3	2 -4
( ) b. Richer children would end up at better schools and poorer children would end up at others	(37(70 -1	27 -2	1 -3	1 -4
( ) c. Having a choice between schools would raise the involvement of parents in their child's education	(38(62 -1	35 -2	1 -3	2 -4
( ) d. Having a choice between schools would mean that a school would lose its identity with the local community	(39(48 -1	49 -2	1 -3	2 -4
( ) e. Having a choice of schools would mean that a child could go to the school best suited for his or her individual needs	(40(71 -1	27 -2	1 -3	2 -4
( ) f. Some schools would be unpopular and children going there would lose out	(41(69 -1	29 -2	1 -3	1 -4

20. **Here are some things that might possibly help to prevent teenagers from *dropping out* of school. For each tell me if you think it would help a lot, help some, not help much, or not help at all in preventing drop-outs.**

ROTATE — START AT "X"	Help A Lot	Help Some	Not Help Much	Not Help At All	Not Sure
( ) a. Having the school inform parents immediately about any absence or truancy	(42(78 -1	17 -2	3 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) b. Having the school sponsor more extra-curricular activities after school	(43(37 -1	39 -2	16 -3	8 -4	1 -5
( ) c. Increasing the opportunities available to those who finish school — such as jobs and college scholarships	(44(72 -1	24 -2	2 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) d. Providing more vocational education and job training	(45(78 -1	19 -2	2 -3	1 -4	* -5
( ) e. Having schools provide special help to students who are failing	(46(76 -1	21 -2	2 -3	1 -4	1 -5
( ) f. Creating programs in which students can go to school part of the day and work at a job part of the day	(47(62 -1	30 -2	5 -3	2 -4	1 -5

INTERVIEWER: BE SURE TO REPEAT THE *STEM* OF THE QUESTION SEVERAL TIMES.

21. **At your school is the problem of students dropping out a major problem, minor problem, or not a problem?**

A major problem	(48(18 -1
A minor problem	44 -2
Not a problem	32 -3
Not sure	6 -4

F1. **What is the last year of school that you yourself completed?**

Less than high school (grades 1-11)	(49(23	-1
High school graduate (grade 12)	39	-2
Some college (grades 13-15)	18	-3
College graduate (grade 16)	11	-4
Post graduate (grade 17 and over)	10	-5
Not sure	*	-6
Refused	*	-7

F2. **Are you presently married, divorced, separated, widowed, or never married?**

Married	(50(75	-1	ASK Q.F3
Divorced	12	-2	SKIP TO Q.F4
Separated	4	-3	
Widowed	4	-4	
Never married	4	-5	
Not sure	—	-6	
Refused	—	-7	

IF MARRIED, ASK

F3. **Is your spouse currently working at full-time job, part-time job, or not working outside the home?**

Full-time job	(51(74	-1
Part-time job	9	-2
Not working outside the home	15	-3
Work at home (vol.)	—	-4
Refused	2	-5

F4. **How old are you?**

IF HESITANT, READ LIST

18 to 20	(52(*	-1
21 to 24	2	-2
25 to 29	9	-3
30 to 34	19	-4
35 to 39	24	-5
40 to 44	22	-6
45 to 49	12	-7
50 to 64	11	-8
65 to 74	1	-9
75 and over	*	-0
Not sure	(53(—	-1
Refused	1	-2

F5. **Are you currently working at a full-time job, part-time job, or not working outside the home?**

Full-time job	(54(59	-1
Part-time job	14	-2
Not working outside the home	23	-3
Work at home (vol.)	—	-4
Refused	4	-5

F6. **Which of the following income categories best describes your total 1986 household income? Was it? (READ LIST)**

$7,500 or less	(55(	9	-1
$7,501 to $15,000		12	-2
$15,001 to $25,000		20	-3
$25,001 to $35,000		20	-4
$35,001 to $50,000		20	-5
$50,001 to $75,000		9	-6
$75,001 or over		4	-7
Not sure		2	-8
Refused		5	-9

F7. **Are you of Hispanic origin or descent, or not?**

Yes, of Hispanic origin	(56(	9	-1
No, not of Hispanic origin		88	-2
Not sure		2	-3
Refused		*	-4

F8. **Do you consider yourself white, black, oriental, or what?**

White	(57(	81	-1
Black		15	-2
Oriental Asian or Pacific Islander		1	-3
American Indian or Alaskan native		1	-4
Not sure		1	-5
Refused		1	-6

F9. **And how many children, *under* age 18, are there in this household who have attended public schools?**

One	(58(	42	-1	
Two		32	-2	
Three		13	-3	
Four		4	-4	
Five		1	-5	
Six or more		1	-6	
None		7	-7	(e.g. now over 18)
Not sure		*	-8	

F10. **What language is spoken most of the time at home?**

English	(59(	97	-1
Spanish		2	-2
Other		1	-3
Not sure		*	-4

F11. **FROM OBSERVATION: Sex of adult respondent.**

Male	(60(	31	-1
Female		69	-2

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That completes the interview. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Region				Size of Place			
East	23	South	37	Central city	25	Outside SMSA	49
Midwest	25	West	16	Rest of SMSA	36		

61-80Z

Number of parents & work status of parents

Solo Parents		
Not working	6%	
Work part-time	4%	25%
Work full time	15%	
Duo Parents		
One not working	27%	
Both not work, at least one only part time	19%	75%
Both work full time	29%	
	100%	

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